Tolstoy in Prerevolutionary Russian Criticism

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Contents

PREFACE

Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) has been described as the most momentous phenomenon of Russian life during the nineteenth century.[1] Indeed, in his own day, and for about a generation afterward, he was an extraordinarily influential writer. During the last part of his life, his towering personality dominated the intellectual climate of Russia and the world to an unprecedented degree. His work, moreover, continues to be studied and admired. His views on art, literature, morals, politics, and life have never ceased to influence writers and thinkers all over the world. Such interest over the years has produced an immense quantity of books and articles about Tolstoy, his ideas, and his work. In Russia alone their number exceeded ten thousand some time ago (more than 5,500 items were published in the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1957) and continues to rise. Clearly, surveys are needed to comprehend a body of criticism so vast. Periodic attempts have been made to present collections of essays[2] and bibliographical surveys, and in this way the criticism after the revolution has been described by the Soviets.[3] Corresponding information about the period before, however, is scarce and, for the most part, incomplete and inadequate. V.S. Spiridonov's admirably thorough annotated bibliography *L. N. Tolstoy: Bio-Bibliografiia 1845–1870* runs only to the year 1870. Yurii Bitovt's comprehensive bibliography of Russian and foreign secondary literature on Tolstoy, *Graf L. N. Tolstoy v literature i is-*

kusstve, is so full of errors as to be of dubious value. Neither can, of course, serve as a survey. Except for introductions to collections of critical essays, short sections in textbooks, or the few studies touching on individual critics or periodicals, this critical activity has been largely overlooked and nowhere explored with the thoroughness it deserves.

This book will survey the criticism with reasonable thoroughness. The objective here is a study broad enough to provide a reliable description of reviewing practices in the period, yet sufficiently limited to avoid becoming mired in consideration of minor critics who were of little interest to their contemporaries and are of even less interest today. Of greatest importance is a balanced representation of the major critics of Tolstoy, weighted in favor of their substantial statements, whether the critique was written by a professional critic, a poet, a novelist, a philosopher, or a politician. To this end reviews of Tolstoy's work by Chernyshevsky, Pisarev, Grigor'ev, Strakhov, Dostoevsky, Turgenev, Mikhailovsky, Merezhkovsky, Plekhanov, and Lenin were selected—ten critics who represent the dominant critical movements of the time. That these were truly the most important critics of the time is shown in part by the frequent references to them in reviews by other critics. Such selection permits the most representative treatment of the vast and varied criticism of Tolstoy the phenomenon and a detailed analysis wherever information is new or in conflict with previously published material. The information thus provided will enable the reader to evaluate the criticism for himself. Resorting to the sources themselves requires extensive research and presents various obstacles, such as the obliqueness of a critic's style. Much of the information, furthermore, is scattered in articles written on widely varying subjects that do not initially address themselves to Tolstoy at all. Such information, which is often significant, has apparently been overlooked. The survey is thus bound to suggest a new interpretation, and even, in some places, a new translation, of Tolstoy's critics in presenting a clear account of what the critics wrote about Tolstoy within the major trends of Russian criticism. To serve this aim, the following organization has been adopted.

Six sections of this study treat the six major trends in Russian prerevolutionary criticism. The first chapter will serve as an introduction by presenting pertinent information concerning the general background. It is divided into two parts to delineate (1) the

concerns of critics at the time and (2) Tolstoy's message—thus furnishing the context in which critical reaction should be interpreted. Some of the historical and cultural problems of Russia, I believe, have never been satisfactorily accounted for; I have attempted to suggest the bases for some of these conflicts in a brief review of the intellectual currents in Russia and an account of the attitudes, policies, and practices of the reviewers who judged and influenced Tolstoy and his readers. To facilitate identification in this study, critics are discussed in six major groups along with information on the background of each philosophical camp.

In the second part of the first chapter I discuss what I believe Tolstoy was trying to do. Because the reviews and the works cannot adequately be discussed in a critical vacuum, I have attempted to evaluate briefly some of the works themselves and, on the strength of the evaluations, to judge the validity of the critical conclusions reached by the reviewers. Both judgments are an integral part of my general approach.

With this approach I hope to make the critical climate in which Tolstoy worked more accessible. Almost all commentators in the past have either taken an adverse, usually mistaken, stand on many aspects of Russian criticism or indulged in undue condescension. I hope that I have avoided the other extreme; I have not attempted to whitewash the Russian critics. There are, however, some who will object to any kind of evaluation or attempt at objectivity as being fundamentally irrelevant. To such critical relativists critical judgments of any kind have no validity but are merely of historical interest. Aside from the philosophical difficulties of such a viewpoint, it will, I believe, prevent one from arriving at an adequate appreciation of the work done by the Russian critics; for they were operating, not in the humanist critical tradition as it developed since the days of Aristotle, Horace, Dryden, and Dr. Johnson, but in a tradition based on very different utilitarian considerations. Yet they also considered themselves to be criticizing *sub specie aeternitatis*, although from their own point of view. Some point of view, call it opinion or judgment, will of necessity be taken by everyone; and the prejudice against the utilitarianism of the Russian position, if nurtured by relativism, will result in the loss of a great mass of valuable criticism of Tolstoy's works by depreciation and neglect.

Whether the reader agrees with my evaluation or not, factual information concerning the critical reception accorded to Tolstoy is

available to him in the chapters following. They provide detailed information on important aspects of each of the major critics' work. The essence of each critic's position is outlined, his principal themes and the nature of his critical approach, and his criticism of Tolstoy, supported by generous quotes from his own writings to give a fair impression of his style and manner of expression. At the end of each chapter is a brief comparison of the critic's views with those of others in the field, some consideration of his influence upon them, and a description of what they have said about him and his work on Tolstoy.

A NOTE ON TRANSLATION

Most of the quotes used here have never been translated before. Those that were I have found to be frequently inaccurate or insensitive to certain shadings of meanings or references that were essential. Therefore I have made new translations throughout. As to style, I do not think a translation should aim at improving it. Stylistic changes that detract from the accuracy of the translation render the improvement worthless. Translation must convey the meaning as accurately as possible, even if it means, sometimes, presenting a certain amount of outlandish thinking that goes with the original message.

There are special difficulties in translating nineteenth century Russian journalese. The language was often ambiguous and oblique. It was dangerous to criticize openly the institutions of the government, so criticism had to be vague and couched in allegorical language. It is known as Aesopic language—a special kind of double-talk that was popular in Russian journalism. The situation, however, is more complex than that. One must do more than merely read between the lines to get the underlying political message. The writers were fascinated with the possibilities of their allegorical language and became its captives. They became obsessed with their abstractions and as excited and involved with creating them as they would be in writing fiction. Their language is replete with complex imagery, hints, extreme colloquialisms, ambiguities, and violated syntax—all of which makes for rather difficult translation. My version of the meaning of many sentences is only one of several possible interpretations. I chose it because I believed it to be most representative of the overall message.

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Parts of chapter 1 were published previously as "Was Tolstoy a Traditionalist or an Innovator?" in volume 11 of the *Transactions of the Association of Russian-American Scholars in USA (1978)*. Parts of chapter 3 are revised versions of "Moral Regeneration: N. N. Straxov's 'Organic' Critiques of *War and Peace*," *Slavic and East European Journal* 20, no. 2 (1976), and "Dostoevsky on Tolstoy: The Immoral Message of *Anna Karenina*," *Connecticut Review* 6, no. 2 (1973). Parts of chapter 7 were published as "Acute Conscience but Dulled Intelligence: A Famous Marxist Judges Tolstoy," *North Dakota Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (1978). I am greatly obliged to the editors of the above-mentioned periodicals for their courtesy in granting me permission to reprint this material.

Tolstoy in Prerevolutionary Russian Criticism

TOLSTOY AND HIS CRITICS: THE INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE

From the middle of the nineteenth century to the revolution of 1917, the volatile intellectual climate of postreform Russia produced six major trends in literary criticism, each inspiring its critics' reaction to Tolstoy. These trends resulted in the following groups. (1) The early radicals of the 1850s and 1860s were pragmatic rationalists who wanted to adapt and use the achievements of Western civilization to overcome Russia's backwardness and who expected literature to promote current social issues. (2) The Slavophile and so-called organic critics—both antirationalist, politically conservative, mythically inclined Russian nationalists, the Slavophiles concerned more with Russia's past, the organic critics with her future—agreed that literature should serve the cause of the Russian people by promoting their message of Russia's mystical nature at home and abroad. (3) A number of writers, poets, and critics known loosely in the 1860s as the aesthetes opposed didacticism in art and developed an aesthetic theory in which art was an autonomous phenomenon that should be enjoyed as a value in itself. They proposed that literature should raise the general level of culture among the population. As critics they believed that their task was to exemplify how a man of taste uses and evaluates literature, and thus show how literature is to be absorbed into society. Their criticism also had its pedants, some of whom were still trying to apply canons of ideal form in the eighteenth-century tradi-

tion. (4) The so-called *narodniki*, a large and diverse group of fairly sophisticated critics including the radicals of the 1870s and 1880s and others who combined a good education with a taste for literature and an interest in civic affairs, were interested in subjective psychology and concerned about the rights of the individual—issues they wanted good literature to promote. (5) The symbolists and the impressionists, who began with the ironic gesture of turning away from the world of the marketplace, with all its blurred sounds and imprecise meanings, renounced rhetoric, moral judgment, and all other idols of the tribe, and concentrated on the poet's function as a maker of poems. Their technique, which was paradoxical, encyclopedic, and discontinuous, was a technical innovation, heralding a new mode. The ironic mood of saying one thing and meaning another is incorporated in their doctrine of the avoidance of direct statement. But as critics they thought of art mainly as a vehicle for the promotion of the artist's ego and believed literature to be an experience in itself. They wanted literature to probe the deeper meaning of reality, which, they thought, could be done by means of a literature that was rich in verbal symbols of the inexpressible. (6) The Marxists, after successive failures of the early radicals and the *narodniki* to come up with viable methods of dealing with various important issues, settled on dialectical materialism as the only reliable method of probing ontological questions and other issues related to man's ability to control his environment. They viewed literature as a means of promoting Marxist ideology and Marxist ideas among the people. All these divergent groups of critics disagreed in their views but had one thing in common—a desire to control the intellectual climate of their country. They will be discussed here in roughly the same chronological order in which they appeared.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Russian intellectuals felt that their politically beleaguered country was being forced by history into an untenable state from which escape would be difficult. To counteract this trend, they turned to literary criticism as the means by which to steer their nation onto a better historic course. As the heirs and spokesmen of this critical attitude, Russian literary critics are apt to make random and haphazard use of their material, often, in fact, to treat the writer as source material for their political ideas, ignoring what does not suit and selecting bits and pieces to moralize on. I believe that there are elements in the

Russian mentality that account for the strange disjointedness of the critics' thinking, their tendency to talk about everything and nothing at once, to digress and yet be extremely popular. This strange informality needs to be explained and understood. It frequently happens that a conscious and cultivated understanding must first be produced through analysis of the cultural patterns in question before one can even think about beginning to understand the issues involved. At the same time, for purposes of scholarship the digressions need to be eliminated as no longer relevant, since they addressed themselves to a contemporary audience that was preoccupied with these issues and that mixed literature and reality, something that is not done today. To comprehend Russian criticism it is therefore essential to approach it with historical understanding, and also with an alertness to the difficulties bestrewing a path on which few of our Western scholarly minds have ventured. This book is thus an attempt to extract from the writings of these popular critics that which is relevant to Tolstoy as part of the country's literature and culture but not sociopolitical, topical, everyday affairs.

The Russian intelligentsia felt cornered by history. During the previous three hundred years their country had changed from a tribal to a modern society. This transition had been the single most important factor shaping Russian life. Its results were momentous. It brought about a radical alteration in Russia's cultural, social, and political goals, as the society began changing gradually from the customs of an illiterate oral society to those of a literate society. Consequently, Russia still presents a blend of old and new customs. Older patterns of thinking and communication with corresponding states of mind persist alongside newer, more recently acquired patterns. This turbulent process, which is inadequately understood, is still going on in Russia, and in it, even posthumously, Tolstoy plays an integral role. The full meaning of this involvement and the significance it indicates for the writings of Tolstoy apparently have not been investigated or taken seriously enough to be related to the pronouncements of his critics. Yet to overlook this fact, or to dismiss its implications as obvious or superficial, is tantamount to missing the whole point of Russian criticism, whose principal concern was never the form of literature but rather the life of the nation.

In fact, Russia's entire way of thinking, not just its political institutions, changed during the late nineteenth century. Karl R.

Popper shows in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* how change from a traditional to a modern society involves a partial dissolution of tribal customs and a series of reactions. Change leads to tension and conflict, but also to a renaissance—a great spiritual revolution, an invention of critical discussion and, in consequence, of logical thought free from magical obsessions.[1] All of these factors were at work in nineteenth-century Russia. At the same time we find symptoms of a new uneasiness and an increase in self-consciousness accompanied by insecurity, as in the appearance of a puzzling new phenomenon—the alienated intellectual (the "superfluous man")—as soon as the strain of civilization was beginning to be felt. Under such conditions the demand arises for a new interpretation of issues in accord with the spirit of the age, to compensate for the altered situation of consciousness. Critics, as the intellectual leaders of the nation, assumed that it was their responsibility to supply such an interpretation. The tasks of Russian criticism thus appear much more varied, and the individual phases of the long process of its development much more contradictory, than is the case in Western criticism.

Historically, like so much else in Russia that is culturally modern in origin, literary criticism began in part as an importation from abroad. At first the situation in the new discipline was relatively simple. Critical articles began to be published in the latter part of the eighteenth century by prominent, well-educated Russians who held that there was a need to guide and control a growing native literature that was becoming strong enough to displace foreign translations as the standard reading fare. Critical standards were borrowed from the West, partly from French classicism (Boileau) and partly from German romanticism (Novalis, the Schlegel brothers). A new dialectical method of intellectual inquiry was adapted from the German philosophy of objective idealism (Hegel) for use in judging literature in polemic debates. But although one may recognize that the standards and aims professed in these articles were broad and humane, in actuality there was a divorce between theory and practice. An intense struggle developed between adherents of liberal, "enlightened," pro-Western attitudes, and those who held conservative, nationalistic views. Far from becoming resolved, ideological conflicts eventually produced two opposite movements, one liberal and one conservative, accommodating, respectively, progressively extraverted international and regressively

introverted conservative nationalistic views. The conflict between the two trends adumbrated the powerful tensions that arose, gradually, in the national psyche after the sudden intrusions of Western culture in Russia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and their momentous growth. The tensions reflect, on the one hand, the changes in thinking usually stimulated by literacy and expressed in a better command of logic, detachment, rationalism, and various desires for enlightenment, rapid progress, and social change. On the other hand, they reflect the mysticism and ebullient conservatism sustained by massive oral traditions of a tribal past, prevalent in large segments of the population and supported by many of the old nobility. By 1852 when Tolstoy's first work, "The Story of My Childhood" (later renamed *Childhood*), was printed in the *Contemporary*, the opposing factions had found support in, and become affiliated with, politically active groups referred to as radicals and Slavophiles. Critics who were disinclined to join either movement and who preferred to remain detached were christened aesthetes and were treated with disdain by members of both activist camps.

From the beginning, relations among all groups were characterized by animosity. The Slavophiles attacked the radicals as theoreticians, using the term as a pejorative label, trying to demonstrate the fallaciousness of their rational, mechanistic, and analytical conceptions. The progressive radicals, who were strict rationalists, condemned the Slavophiles for being retrograde mystics, but agreed with them that literature must have a message. However, the battle between the civic and aesthetic critics was fought with a bitterness that made any reconciliation seem impossible. Radicals and Slavophiles alike expressed savage contempt for the effete notions of the aesthetic critics, with their idea of "art for art's sake." Both found the theory that literature should serve as its own message deeply repugnant. They thought it a shameful waste of a valuable cultural resource that could be used to promote important ideas. Because attitudes toward literature were so drastic, few commented on the artistic value of the work itself.

One of their most common attributes was a sense of performing an important function, of being part of a serious endeavor—serious, not solemn, for there is too much sarcasm in most of the reviews to pose a question of solemnity. Sharing this serious attitude, the critics thought their function was to influence both writ-

ers and readers. The area of specific concern for many critics was determined by prior assumptions of what is and what is not important, relevant knowledge. Many critics were fired by a desire to become intellectual leaders of the people. Unfortunately, some of them deluded themselves into thinking that their activity was the equivalent of the work of literature itself. Critics frequently charged each other with being unable to discern an important issue treated successfully by an author (cf. Pisarev and Grigor'ev, pp. 46, 82 below). They took malicious pleasure in exposing so-called inferior considerations that were based on, for example, the explicator's own moral or aesthetic judgment, which they took pains to present as subjective, arbitrary, and therefore irrelevant. The eccentrics on the fringe of each movement were welcome targets for the fire of the other critics. Today, now that the dust has settled, one can see that the fire on all sides was concentrated on the extreme flanks of the enemy. The center of each group was left unscathed since, in truth, there was no fundamental disagreement between them. They all wanted good literature to promote the cultural message of the Russian people, even if their individual notions about the nature of that message differed considerably from camp to camp and from man to man. All critics urged writers to envision new types of Russian men and women who would be representative of the times and could serve as models of conduct for future generations. The radicals wanted their model citizens of the future to be depicted as thoroughly civilized, enlightened people: progressive, rational individuals, well-educated urban bourgeois (hence the Soviets politely dismiss their views as utopian socialism), who would be free from the mistakes, the customs, and the prejudices of Russia's dismally ignorant tribal past. An outstanding example of literature written to radical specifications is Chernyshevsky's famous 1863 didactic bestseller of dubious artistic merit, *What Is to Be Done? Tales about New People*, which presents a series of model citizens—appealing characters who struggle against great odds to attain a worthwhile goal. Eventually they succeed in freeing themselves from their rude tribal past and sexual prejudices, and from then on lead successful, industrious, socially useful lives.

The Slavophiles, who were known to their opposition as reactionaries, condemned Chernyshevsky's book for its "one-sided rationalism" (see Dostoevsky's polemic with it in his *Notes from the*

Underground), its "rectilinear" ideas, and its cardboard characters. Assuredly, the Slavophiles projected their own models as contemporary versions of the saints and heroes of Russia's fabulous past. They criticized the radicals' criteria, which they found too negative and nihilistic, but not their methods. They agreed that literature should edify and civilize the people, helping them adjust to modern life. But they looked for their message in conservative, nonpolitical areas. They worshipped the obsolete, often garish forms of old Russian tribal lore and culture and wanted Russian writers to use and celebrate it in modern works by bringing it up to date and back to life. They urged writers to galvanize the relics of Russia's presumably glorious tribal past, to employ exotic forms and expressions derived from old Russian folklore and culture, and to develop an ornamental style to match it.

Remarkable early success in this area of mainly formal accomplishment was achieved by N.S. Leskov (1831–95), a writer with a gift for an unusual turn of phrase but no talent for plot who devised and introduced the written equivalent of traditional Russian oral narrative, since then named the *skaz*. He was a past master of a style that escapes the fixity of the printed page, that sounds in our ears with the immediacy of the heard voice, the very voice of unpretentious truth. Some of his stories appear as though they may have been designed for the amusement of Russian merchants whose financial power made them want to claim a descent from fabulous heroes and saints. The ceremonial style in a number of his other stories reflects the manners and mores and modes of address pertaining to medieval days. But Leskov's writings are essentially not medieval, nor are they merchant tales with a style molded to suit the specific customs, mannerisms, and pleasures of a restricted elite. He wrote to restore the rhythms and mannerisms of the oral speech in the new medium of literacy.

The conservation of old Russian customs by the Slavophiles was not a symptom of romantic nostalgia. Rather, it provided a setting in which to preserve the group identity of the Russian people. The Slavophiles, who worried about the disintegration of the Russian family under pressure of civilization (see Dostoevsky's remarks on this issue in chap. 3), felt that the Russian customs provided a matrix within which to contain and preserve their national character. They felt that tradition, the continuity of law, custom, and usage must be maintained, or Russian society would disintegrate

and its cohesion would be lost. They wanted to develop literature in this period as essentially the encyclopedic and moral instruction of Russians, to preserve Russian integrity. This literature, however, was intended to be pan-Russian. Its continuity was to be supplied by a fresh and elaborate development of the oral style, whereby a whole way of life, and not simply the deeds of heroes, would be held together and so rendered transmissible between the generations. Several other writers not in the least belonging to the Slavophile orientation (Zamiatin, Bely, Remizov, Zoshchenko) also engaged in developing a new oral style to suit modern Russia. Inhibition against too much change encouraged some of them to frame contemporary events as though they were the acts and words of ancestors. This, naturally, did not please the progressives. For the best part of his creative life, Leskov was hounded and ostracized by the radical press for combining in his work "the worst features of Slavophilism, aestheticism, and obscurantism."

The anachronistic nature of demands to restore literature to its tribal role as the encyclopedia of society's values is obvious.[2] The notion that literature performs a serious educational function and has a significant effect upon the fortunes of society derives from older, preliterate forms of social organization that depend on poets for their continuity and coherence. In oral societies the work of poets is essential to the development and transmission of culture and must so function; otherwise it is not respected. Besides being the artists and entertainers of the tribe, the poets are also its wise men and prophets. They formulate and popularize new ideas, invent and lay down ground rules for proper personal conduct, and describe in vivid, entertaining, and uplifting form the important issues and the desirable and undesirable features of community life. They share the belief that a poet is a sage. As such, he is the final authority on all matters he treats, and sooner or later he deals with everything in the heavens above and the earth below. Sometimes he advises the technical trades; but for the most part he invents and promulgates various formulas for a good life—procedures that help integrate the individual into society and steer him through life. In this way the poet proves his worth to his society. He gives it a set of values that are current, a model structure to emulate, and a stable self-image. In a word, the poets of oral societies do what organized religion and culture do with varying success in their societies—provide satisfying norms for those deep

human needs that otherwise find a banal and dangerous antisocial expression. In Russia this concept of poet as sage prevailed; it exists yet, complicated by modernity but basically intact.

Nearly every prerevolutionary critic agreed, for example, that the protagonist of the new Russian fiction should be a commoner, not the nobleman who had been the hero in the past, whose historic role was now finished. They usually lavishly praised the writer who had succeeded in making a commoner the strong hero, and they censured with specific criticism the writer who failed to do so. Chernyshevsky, for instance, reproached Turgenev for having failed to produce a strong, positive new hero in his works ("A Russian at a Rendezvous" [1858], to which the aesthete P. V. Annenkov replied in a rebuttal entitled "The Literary Type of a Weak Man" (1858) that the type of hero Turgenev created was not only positive but dynamic: he stood for progress and creativity, creative people being always such "weak" characters. Another aesthete, A. V. Druzhinin, discussed the controversial hero of Goncharov's famous novel *Oblomov* in similar terms.[3] In a pathetic "Preface to My Novels," Turgenev tried to defend himself against his accusers, claiming that he had done his level best to depict and embody, conscientiously and dispassionately, in appropriate types what Shakespeare called "the body and pressure of time."[4] Critics of all persuasions thus wanted Russian writers to serve as bards and prophets of a new Russian society of classless citizens. More recently, the Bolsheviks have repeated the demand for this new type of hero even more restrictively, insisting that he be a proletarian.[5]

The origins of this idea in oral tradition appear to be beyond reasonable doubt. Certainly it was from this point of view that Tolstoy's value as a writer was judged by his Russian critics. They judged not his art but his potential as a cultural leader of the nation. His performance as an inventor of new patterns for living in a modern world was admired by some and deprecated by others. Any evaluation of Tolstoy's critics that fails to consider this basic criterion of their judgment is likely to be deficient. Moreover, adoration of writers and exaggerated concern for what they can do, as though they were magi, able to summon and control the dark sinister forces of our primitive unconscious nature that may destroy culture, are psychologically sound notions born of intuitive wisdom and nonanalytical patterns of thinking. And indeed, as Victor Terras points out, Russian critics speak of poets as prophets in the most

literal sense.[6] If we consider this attitude we cannot lump utilitarian Russian criticism together with sociological criticism. The latter is rational in nature, Western in origin, and purely social in orientation; whereas the former is a mixture of mystic and social ideas—thought-feelings about social and cultural affairs that are relatively poorly differentiated, as is characteristic of traditional, archaic thought. Clearly, we have a situation where archaic notions and progressive thinking overlap each other in the critics' minds.

But this peroration raises still another problem that we have touched on in the previous paragraphs: the reasons for the confusion in the minds of the critics. V. V. Zenkovsky in his *History of Russian Philosophy*, devotes a good deal of space to what he calls the "theurgic restlessness" of the Russian intelligentsia in this period. Aside from theurgy, the restlessness was caused largely by anxiety—not knowing what to do now, where to steer the nation, whether to pursue a destiny that follows the Western ideal of territorial expansion or to promote Russia's eschatological message of moral regeneration, i.e., whether to pursue a Western course of progress in space or an Eastern one in time. Pavel Miliukov makes some revealing remarks about this dilemma in his "Degeneration of Slavophilism," where he claims that the idea of nationhood interfered with Russian messianism, whereas the messianic idea interfered with the idea of nationhood.[7] Some of the anxieties appear to have arisen from personal subliminal conflicts—doubts about the reality of divine interference in human affairs, as enlightened Russians abandoned their traditions, lost faith in eternal life and the sacral world of religion in favor of the profane world of science, progress, and strict temporality. Evidently, this created a conflict of consciousness, which expressed itself in an obsessive consternation at not being able to figure out what to do to satisfy the zeitgeist that at this time, appeared to them dressed in a thoroughly modern, scientific garb as *history*. Theirs was a divided state of mind. The topic seems to me important, and I hope I may be allowed to digress to illustrate it.

The causes of this anomaly may be considerably more substantial than mere bewilderment from rapid social change, if one is to believe Claude Lévi-Strauss, who, along with Havelock, Cassirer, Eliade, and Jung,[8] declares that civilization and literacy cause significant changes in traditional man's thinking habits. These writers suggest that the "savage mind" (traditional man) tends to think in

space (images) and believe[9] in time, whereas modern man has come to think mainly in time (logic) and believe in space. Modern man therefore explores the *limits of space* and vigorously pursues territorial, social, and intellectual progress, whereas traditional man, who abhors change and is not interested in social progress, pursues moral progress and the *limits of time* (eschatology). This pattern, says Lévi-Strauss, changes with advances in civilization, when interest in eschatology slowly fades[10] and is replaced by interest in scientific goals.[11]

Noted scholars have looked into the divided state of the Russian mind. G. P. Fedotov asserts that it is still mostly on the side of religious imagery and atemporality, and that Russian peasants remain religious to this day, clinging in a new civilization to the old values of a faith in supernatural, sacral aspects of an atemporal life.[12] Zenkovsky insists that the mind of the Russian intellectual is dominated by what he calls "mystic realism": a theurgic faith in history as destiny and a belief in a metaphysical connection between the realms of nature and culture.[13] Nicolas Berdiaev claims that "the Russian idea" is that life is a meaningless affair as an individual experience but has meaning on a higher plane as part of the life of the nation, which must play a significant role in a hidden reality made up not only of commonplace secular, i.e., *natural*, experiences, but also of a man-made, *cultural*, supernatural segment of experience.[14] Such ideas clearly originate in archaic, symbolic thought. Popper has shown that whereas modern literate societies function largely by way of abstract relations, such as exchange and cooperation, tribal or closed societies have a biological unity.[15] Indeed, the average Russian even today sees his nationality, not as an ethnic fact, but as a mystic and fatal condition and a commitment to a historic goal. The Russian is extraordinarily, one might say suicidally, attached to his people. Countless testimonials exist besides Alexander Solzhenitsyn and his book *The Gulag Archipelago* about the Russian's strange need to be with or return to his people, even with the knowledge that he might be destroyed as a result. The Russian has an irrational sense of belonging there no matter what. He sees himself as alive only as a member of his tribe, this body of people that, to him, is a mystic social organism like a monstrous swarm of bees that is at once his home and destiny and that he calls his *narod*.[16] The role of this *narod* in the overall scheme of things depends on the leaders it elects to follow and the historic

course they choose to pursue. In essence, then, one can say that the average Russian cares for no salvation other than as a member of his nation, which is his entrance to immortality. The intellectual message of the nation, the values and ideas by which all its members in good standing will be judged at the end of time by some recondite agent of history, is in the hands of leaders and writers who, as the sages of the nation, decide on its content, and thereby critically influence the nation's future. This somewhat irrational theory should help explain the Russian's extraordinary predilection for ideology, as well as the admiration and apprehension with which they treat their writers. In spite of the inroads made into Russian thinking by Western rationalism and skepticism, this irrational attitude persists and colors Russian thinking to an astonishing degree. It also seriously affects the policies of Russian governments.[17] It is fair to conclude that the cultural situation described is one in which traditional thinking still dominates the important relationships and valid transactions of life.

Probable answers to two of our questions have now already been revealed, namely, why message is so important to Russian criticism, and why Russian critics treat Tolstoy with such vehemence and ideological intolerance. And, although much of it may be speculative, the answers to several other puzzles become apparent if we consider precisely what the educational mechanisms amount to in an oral culture. Presumably, as Russia accommodates herself to literacy, these mechanisms will wither away. But for the time being her sociopolitical structure still resembles nonliterate societies where the task of education could be described as putting the whole community, by means of repeated indoctrination, into a formulaic state of mind in order to preserve its integrity.

So far, so good. Yet I propose now to look at the problem from the reverse end of the telescope, so to speak, not as a part of a process but as seen at a point in time. I have outlined the probable causes of confusion in the minds of progressive as well as conservative critics. Indeed, the atmosphere among the literati at this time was almost hysterical—fraught with irrational tensions and charged with emotion. The sharpness of polemics in the press, the importance attached to current issues, the deviousness with which some important issues were treated—all suggest the bizarre, morbid, anomalous mood of the time. In an age that was witnessing the aftermath of the change of Russia from an oral to a literate society,

it was natural that concern with political principles and theories should have been intense and the criticism heated. In the midst of the furor, only an occasional voice could be heard appealing to the participants, urging restraint. The overheated atmosphere is usually traced to the difficulties created by the obsolete political regime. And, to be sure, these were responsible in part. At the time, however, there were also considerable tensions in the social fabric of Russia due to the burgeoning conflict between the old establishment and the rising new intellectual elite of "men of odd backgrounds," the *raznochintsy*, who were preparing for leadership, challenging the cultural values, power, and privileges of the old elite, and clamoring for the destruction of its supporting structure, which was based on the old tribal hereditary class distinctions. For this reason, Turgenev coined for them the name *nihilists* in his famous novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862), a work of literature that became the arena for this heated conflict and the issues it created. In this case, we may say, the novel was usefully and rather precisely applied to help define a current sociopolitical problem, and proposed a method for dealing with it.

But there is, slipped in during the course of this development, a curious circumstance: many of the critics who wrote at this time were not literary critics at all but social thinkers who turned to literature for political reasons. The archaic system of government, in its own distress caused by rapid changes in the social fabric of the nation, had instituted a severely restrictive, repressive censorship that bluntly forbade open discussion of political issues. Literature was the only forum that remained at least partly open to indirect discussion of vital issues. Literary criticism thus offered the only possibility of intellectual control over life, and literature was the sole means of testing and transmitting ideas. Already in 1830 the famous poet-aristocrat Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) had proposed in all seriousness that literary criticism should be developed into a science to control public opinion.[18] The history of Russian criticism, we conclude, is the story of intellectual controls that failed, for Russian history took its course regardless of its critics. This course was one of gradual regression toward more archaic, tribal forms of communal life that, apparently, laid the groundwork for the acceptance of communism.

Within itself, Russian criticism reflected the same polarization that was characteristic of trends on the sociopolitical scene. The

Europeanized aesthetes, who had become alienated from their roots through an attitude of civilized disdain for the coarse Russian customs, eventually disappeared from the scene and were replaced by the symbolists. In every way just as uprooted as the aesthetes, the symbolists organized a successful quasi-redemptive return to their tribal roots. They revised the archaic notion of the poet as a tribal sage, but with an ingenious fin-de-siècle twist: they claimed to have lost interest in the coarse and trivial world of *phenomena* and rejected the materialism of the urban philistine, the modern savage, whom they would neither guide, advise, nor teach. Instead, they pictured themselves as mysterious magi, detached from banal worldly concerns, living alone in a world of *noumena*, protected against the phenomenological threat of philistine life. Thus they were inclined to cultivate the symbolist ivory tower, to defend the poet's self-esteem and social status by indulgence in "mysteries" incomprehensible and useless outside the symbolist community, useless even to the majority of the Russian people who never could relate to the symbolists' production of verse and prose. Yet artists are strongly influenced by their contemporary culture and its formulas, even if the formulas are inadequate to accord with the more sophisticated forms of their actual artistic achievement. It need not surprise us, then, that the works of Russian symbolists prove to have been composed formulaically and rhythmically, reflecting the return to the original tribal (oral) operational form. However, any attempt to summarize symbolist doctrine exposes the vagueness of the pronouncements of the various symbolists, not to mention their frequent contradictions. One might be forgiven for coming to doubt whether the term *symbolism* has any specific meaning at all, and to conclude that it is, like the term *romanticism,* simply the label for a cluster of tendencies, many of them not even closely related. All symbolist doctrines seem either to rest upon some kind of idealism or else to deny the dualism of ideality and materialism by believing these concepts to be abstractions out of a primary reality in which they exist undifferentiated. Some, like D. S. Merezhkovsky, were philosophers of symbolic form (see chap. 6). Most Russian symbolists tended to be experimenters with poetic form. Yet some of their leading representatives, such as Merezhkovsky, Zinaida Hippius, A. Blok, and V. Ivanov, felt that they were also committed to social progress. They quite seriously believed in the social and national mission of their movement, and saw themselves

as prophets, leaders, and reorganizers of Russian life. They had a theurgic conception of art as verbal magic, an idea that was especially important to the philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev and that emerged at various times in the poetry and criticism of Bely, Blok, V. Ivanov, and other symbolists.[19]

The positions of the civic critics also hardened and became more restrictive. The romantic early radicals were replaced by the slightly less romantic *narodniki,* the rural tribalists (the name literally means that) who naïvely adored the Russian peasant, threw bombs, and expected a cryptic message of salvation from Mother Russia. The defeat of the *narodniki* movement and the repression of the eighties were warning enough that Russian society would not be remade by romantic dreams and isolated acts of terrorism. The *narodniki* were replaced by the more urbane and practical Marxists, who corrected ideological blunders and a futile rural orientation by adopting as their own political base the cause of the rootless and exhausted tribe of landless peasants who were flocking to the cities in search of sustenance. The Marxists gave these poor, disoriented people a new name, the proletariat; a new tribal ideology, communism; and a new cultural identity and lease on life. The Marxists, with their functional approach to life, scorned any romanticism in literature that contained religious ideals, which the Marxists rejected as philosophic idealism and declared to be ideologically incompatible with materialism.

The attitudes of the Slavophiles also deteriorated toward restriction and intolerance. Their views gravitated further toward nationalism, mysticism, provincialism, and various other reactionary positions. The trend, then, was everywhere toward restriction: to conformity with standards set by an existing community, controls on thoughts and practices, and, in a word, traditionalism. This trend suggests the kind of political relationship by which society expected to be governed at the time. Conservatism was gaining ground. Many Russians were angered and frustrated by the mounting pressures of change. They wanted to retreat from the dizzying advances in civilization, go back in time, retrace the nation's steps in history to see what went wrong. They blamed the government and the aliens for their troubles, which seemed to have multiplied astronomically since Westernization and urbanization. They wanted to dismantle the social structure that had become oppressive, to regroup and start anew from the cult of life as the simple tribal

commune had. They sought to retreat as far as possible from Westernism, in which wit, they thought, merely produced woe and freedom of thought brought trouble. This attitude was expressed in, among other things, a new promotion of the archaic notion of the village commune (*obshchina*); the assassination of its strongest opponent, the able state minister P. A. Stolypin (1862–1911), by radical terrorists; and the growing chauvinism, bigotry, intolerance of aliens, and violence, as in the sharp increase of pogroms of Jews before the revolution. It is not too difficult to see how this Slavophile-inspired spirit of inertia and the nostalgic yearnings for the mythical "good old days"—for security, life in a closed commune, exclusion of aliens, and a return to the womb of Mother Russia for new strength after a long and debilitating foreign war (1914–18)—became transmuted into an enthusiasm for communism, which promised not only to satisfy these fundamental urges but also to offer an exciting spree of revenge and material rewards to the deprived people of the proletariat. More important, by returning the capital city to Moscow, the hub of old Muscovy, the communists would end the Saint Petersburg era of cosmopolitan Russian culture with all its vague, liberal, bookish notions of universal progress, the abstract, homogenized culture that had been foisted upon the nation by a renegade czar (Peter I) who built his eerie swamp[20] metropolis in cahoots with hated foreign devils.

So, the urge to retribalize, to stop thinking and start feeling good again, and to get rid of the aliens and an incompetent czar (Nicholas II) who was influenced by his foreign wife became an enormously complex, emotionally charged issue that caught up the most personal and intimate feelings of the entire nation as they were deeply rooted in Russia's obscure tribal past. There was rioting, and many expected worse things to come: an apocalyptic purgation, a mystic (which is to say, intellectually undifferentiated) regenerative experience on a national scale, which did arrive with the revolution as Lenin predicted. Some visionary poets had been predicting apocalyptic calamities for quite some time (Lermontov, A. Blok). In any event, the impelling mood was a vastly more complex, potent issue than a mere fashionable trend toward mysticism and anarchism, led by famous and aristocratic anarchists and mystics such as Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy, among culturally disaffected members of an uprooted intelligentsia and a disenfranchized aristocracy.

In view of this, is it surprising that the so-called literary critics, for all the jarring discord among them on the intellectual plane, were united in feeling a profound uneasiness and anticipated an impending national reversal, or that, in their search for guidance, they turned to Tolstoy? Beneath the gloss of Western sophistication, many of them still cherished the naïve conviction that every great writer was a voice from God, an intellectual czar or judge (they had a winged phrase, "ruler of thought," which Pushkin had applied to Lord Byron), giving them the correct interpretation of reality and the means of accommodating it. They were looking for a father figure who would step forward in times of trouble, deliver the people from evil, and lead them into the promised land of the future. Yet in their arrogance and confusion from the subliminal conflict between a new consciousness and a lingering savage lack of mental discipline, they expected the answers to lie in confirmations of their own opinions. And when Tolstoy failed to oblige, they self-righteously charged him with being a great artist but a poor thinker, i.e., a failure as a national sage. Yet Tolstoy's accomplishments, the nature of which are only now emerging into full view, must be considered extraordinary in many ways. One can say without exaggeration that all the momentous issues that moved Russia in his day were in one way or another reflected in his works. He actually sought, and sometimes succeeded in finding, viable solutions to most of the problems that plagued society. The issue seems to me important enough that I examine it in detail.

TOLSTOY AS A PROPHET

To begin with, all of Tolstoy's work achieves the aim of good writers everywhere: he was able to reflect, idealize, and modify national standards of morality, and to influence people's fundamental values. Tolstoy's extraliterary projects, moreover, evince essentially the same orientation. In his experiments in teaching peasant children with heuristic methods, Tolstoy attempted to enter upon a new age of education that aims for discovery rather than instruction, a new way of teaching that avoids the harsh and crippling pressure of formal education, so as to replace the dangerous resentment that urges children to lawlessness by developing enthusiasm for learning and free development of natural talents. He knew of the dangerous resurgence of crude violence and tribalism in Russia and was aware of the tendency of natural

man to balk at cultural restrictions, even to rebel if he no longer feared a swift and sure retaliation. Tolstoy repeatedly warned the last czar, in urgent personal letters, that harsh restrictions, indiscriminately applied by a weak, incompetent government, were a bad policy that could trigger rioting. Concerned with the natural amoralism of the modern man, he wanted to free Russians from cultural domination by rational and aesthetic standards as they made their first contacts with literature. His series of *Readers for the People* and *Intermediary* publications advocated a sound Christian morality in place of an intellectual sophistication that the Russian people, he felt, did not need and could not absorb because such skills take time to develop and, unless based on traditional culture and ethics, lead to nihilism. He appealed to everyone to "bethink themselves" in terms of ethics: stop violence, wars, national arrogance, and racial (tribal) discrimination. He condemned aesthetic hedonism—art that served only pleasure—on grounds that such art made man selfish and arrogant and stunted his moral and religious sensibilities. Even Tolstoy's very strange doctrine of "nonresistance to evil" seems to have been invented for the moral, rather than intellectual, betterment of Russians. It looks very different, queer, ambivalent, and yet prophetic in the light of subsequent history, in which revolution and mass violence swept the country, nearly destroying its culture. It was followed by a popular posture of meek nonresistance to a harsh reign of terror imposed by a regime of archaic thinkers whose moral sensibilities were never akin to Tolstoy's, yet who now admire him and label him a "mirror" of their revolution. This curious admiration for an old-world aristocrat despite his background and religious stance is a major mystery that has not been explained by Lenin's famed articles on Tolstoy (see chap. 7). The admiration shows no signs of abating, despite major changes in the composition of the new regime since it was originally formed by Lenin in 1917.

The cause of this evident incongruity appears related to the fact that, in essentials, Tolstoy, too, was an archaic thinker. His moral position was not the strongest feature of his message and art. Unintentionally, in his art he reflected the amoral, intuitive, "pagan" mentality of many Russians and their traditional mode of thinking and feeling. He gave unconscious expression to, we may say, the dark undifferentiated soul of Mother Russia: that side of the Russian character that has remained innocent of culture and

resists it, that was at first greatly disturbed and then painfully torn apart by the conflicting forces of nature and invading culture, and that preferred to remain unencumbered by culture. It is the same essential, maternal, materialistic side of the Russian character that communism approached, by which it was shaped in Russia, and to which it owes its success.

TOLSTOY AS A WRITER

Tolstoy's writings seem to reflect the totality of Russian life in both form and content. The formal peculiarities of his technique embody, as it were, Russia's growing split between her unconscious and conscious, her traditional communal values and modern Western individualism. His works display the same incongruous mixture of conservative tendencies and radical innovation that characterizes Russian society and mores and is found in the works of many outstanding Russian writers who combine "archaisms and innovations"[21] each in a blend peculiarly his own. Tolstoy's works are noted for their raw, undigested appearance: polished artistic passages are interspersed with highly self-conscious "invented" passages that detract from the overall quality of his work. The dual structure of his novels is so apparent, in fact, that several critics have spoken of actual stylistic and thematic breaks in them. The divisions, however, are not fatal to the artistic result. In fact, some of them provide additional insights and effects, such as the impression of conflict between Tolstoy's unconscious genius and the hyperconscious intellect that interferes with it and seems disturbed or unbalanced by culture. This feature has intrigued some critics, notably Mikhailovsky, who found it meaningful enough to discuss repeatedly and at length (see chap. 5).

The old-fashioned quality of Tolstoy's works is ostensibly related to past trends in European literature. His overt didacticism, stressing the moral purpose of art, is characteristic of the classical period. The "thinking intellect" who interferes with the "great talent" who writes the story for him is a device used by humanists and is found in the figure of the intruding neoclassicist author. The situation is actually a common one in eighteenth-century literature, where the narrator or editor often assumes the role of the omniscient guardian or alter ego of the protagonists. The variety of life is thus filtered through the medium of a harmonious, serene personality. The fake eyewitness account, which blends with memoir, confes-

sion, and travelogue, artlessly told but actually composed by rifling a *Baedeker,* is used by Goethe, Fielding, Thackeray, and Rousseau. The conflicts between poetry from the heart and the sordid prose of reality in characters who are outwardly ridiculous but inwardly great (Grisha the Fool in *Childhood,* Karataev in *War and Peace*) are themes that go back even further in time to preceding centuries (*Don Quixote*).

Tolstoy's earliest writings, moreover, were naïve, simple experiments in how to depict the flow of life; and the depiction of people as they are living and acting at the moment is a feature of sentimentalism, in which fiction strives to portray the unfolding of life. Here the narrator is active and agreeable and enjoys the present, which for him is filled with potentially crucial memories and vows; and the narrative is sometimes stretched to the point of actually stopping time to show the flow of thoughts (Sterne). Tolstoy does all of this and more with his "inner monologue." Actuality—life at the present moment—is important in Tolstoy's writing. Ideals are not simply relegated to the future (as they are, e.g., in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*); instead, characters are in the process of acting on their important concerns. Tolstoy employs the extensive as well as the intensive style of eighteenth-century sentimentalism, featuring background as well as foreground. He is at the same time meditative and descriptive, generalizing and realistic. Like his predecessors Fielding, Defoe, and Balzac, he achieves a heightened sense of actuality by combining detailed exposition with broad generalizations. He weaves a complex fabric of high verisimilitude by fusing thoroughly believable, commonplace, concrete details with generally known facts of history and geography. The first-person narrative allows him a direct treatment of feeling, which provides the gauge of sincerity and standard of moral values in sentimentalism, where the idea developed that to be natural was to be good and the noble savage came to be depicted as superior to civilized man. Such themes of worshipping essential, material Mother Nature are utilized by Tolstoy. As Captain Khlopov says in his early story "The Raid," "One learns from nature all the important lessons." Tolstoy depicted other themes of sentimentalism: the debilitating effects of "artificial" city life in pointed contrast to the regenerative effects of healthy "natural" life in the idyllic countryside; the loss of a sense of truth from the dehumanizing effects

of civilization; the simple hero and the slick villain; and the notion that a pure heart will give a spontaneous response that is immediate and true, whereas deliberation, detachment, contemplation, and a rational response are tantamount to insincerity and corruption.

Tolstoy's novels, furthermore, are pedagogical. The genre intends the education of the reader as well as the hero, revealing its origins in the didactic and optimistic themes of the Enlightenment. Tolstoy's novels resemble the sentimental novel of education called the *Bildungsroman*—a development of a traditional genre that employs the simple narrative of the picaresque tradition to depict a leisurely odyssey to self-awareness by a hero who ripens into maturity after a series of adventures that range from the sensual to the sublime. The emphasis on the conciliatory element—the protagonist's eventual assimilation into society—shows the genre's affinity with more archaic, unpsychological forms of fiction such as the folk tale with its naïve didactic message: the suggestion that every responsible individual must eventually integrate smoothly with society. Significantly, the hero of the sentimental novel that takes him through a picaresque journey of education does not grow, but simply matures. Eventually he flees back into the lap of bourgeois culture, accepting its solid, philistine values of wealth, success, and marriage. At this point Tolstoy departs from the sentimental journey of education. Deep and far-reaching changes take place in the Tolstoyan protagonist precisely with regard to his assimilation into society, for they lead ultimately to his repudiation of its values and his role in it. Tolstoy's novels are stories of development, but a development with a different dimension and direction, as they point to the development of the inner man. His basic plot, to be sure, does follow rather closely the pattern common to the nineteenth-century novel of education: the hero spends a secluded childhood on a landed estate, undergoes several years of formal schooling, and completes his education by an extensive journey. But there is a radical difference between the forward-looking, utopian mood of the sentimental novel and the anguished state of the Tolstoyan protagonist. It is therefore not quite accurate to describe such borrowed patterns as influences upon Tolstoy. They were merely a foundation he used in discovering reality as he perceived it, which involved a journey into the unknown inner world of the protagonist. Memory and reflection, together with their attendant

phenomenon of moral guilt, not action and adventure, are the moving forces shaping the character's development, and in this the author himself actively participates.

This development arose, for Tolstoy, directly from the therapeutic act of writing itself, which he conceived of, at least in part, as an imaginative means of taking the sting of reality out of experience by making it repeatable. Tolstoy wrote to give himself a clearer idea of his own development and nature by describing his life and experiences. His earliest attempts to write were projections of his urge to investigate reality, to infuse meaning into an ambivalent environment that tormented him and resisted his attempts to understand it. He attacked duality, the paradoxically ambivalent nature of experience, in these sketches as though it were an intellectual problem. His narrator is at pains to correlate experience with preconceived notions—manifestations of the outer world of things with the inner world of thoughts—by bringing them together in his consciousness. In the attempt he continually evaluates both. He asks, for example, "Why is it that everything that seems so beautiful inside my soul becomes so ugly in reality?" Such judgment varies considerably from the accommodation portrayed by Sterne, who simply depicts external reality as absurd and illogical. It does not, furthermore, imply a desire to control reality. The goal of the Tolstoyan hero is his own development as an individual. Instead of trying to conquer nature without, he attempts to conquer his own nature by understanding it. He grows by trying to understand himself. B. Eikhenbaum has pointed out that *Childhood,* for Tolstoy, was not a matter of indulging in sentimental nostalgia about an idyllic childhood spent on a landed estate, but a research project, an investigation of human nature, a meticulous self-study undertaken as a journey of discovery into the secrets of growing consciousness.[22] For Tolstoy consciousness was an important issue, involving the meaning of life and the destiny of man. His study of child psychology was the first step in his study of the natural man who, for him, symbolized the Russian national character.

Confessional autobiographies constitute the first half of Tolstoy's works in the 1850s. In his early sketches he attempts to reinforce his message with form. The gradual retreat toward the days of one's childhood employs forms indicating the psychological time of memory—autobiography, diary, and notebook. The image of the hero becomes transformed from that of adventurer through space

to confessor, i.e., an adventurer through time. To suggest this transition Tolstoy experiments with *physiological sketch* to psychological descriptions as they might be gleaned from the works of sentimentalists. As a result, his marvelously concrete analysis becomes internalized. The "object-ivity" (relatedness to objects) of his descriptions is carried into the inner world of his protagonists, where it becomes part of the character. The growing psyche of the child-protagonist of *Childhood* is depicted in this way. In a number of ways, Tolstoy's autobiographical novels, and not such others as Turgenev's *Sportsman's Sketches,* are the most logical, and at the same time the most radical, development of the genre. The journal form, for instance, is given a function similar to the role of the confessions or the autobiography, for which it served as a preliminary sketch. The method underlined the fact that in the diary-autobiography the vital factor is the individual's growth. He grows by recollecting and reflecting upon his experiences. He writes because he thinks that he has never knowingly experienced a childhood, never consciously knew himself as a child. He is preoccupied with the idea that his childhood did not exist if he does not remember it fully. The intolerable burden of this unresolved past bears down on him; it impresses him as a sickness from which he must recover. He wants to shoulder the burden of his past, to affirm the organic connection between himself now and what he was in the past. He tries to recollect as much of his childhood and youth as he can. Losing all track of time, he buries himself in recollections of his earlier years, recording them as he remembers them up to the very point of the present. Extensive picaresque passages thus alternate with intensive confessional elements, until the two are combined in an ultimate synthesis that both transcends and unites the two elements of opposition. Tolstoy gave form to this psychological journey in his analytical trilogy, *Childhood, Boyhood,* and *Youth,* which dramatizes his idea of the three initial stages of consciousness. Each work represents one of the three basic stages in the development of personality. The first and most naïve of these is childhood, a state of low, intermittent consciousness as it occurs in the naïve, untutored mind of a child who is content merely to watch something going on. The second stage is that of a boy who not only sees but feels and can intermittently think and understand. The third stage is that of a young man, more or less fully developed, who is capable not only of seeing and feeling, but

also of thinking and reflecting upon his experiences. At this stage the young man is continuously, fully, and painfully conscious of himself. Throughout the narrative not only do we watch the antics of the protagonist as he learns from his picaresque adventures, but we also participate in the experiences directly through the eyes of the protagonist, at a remove in time and space. The self-portrait of the artist as a young man affords us, in effect, two viewpoints, that of the "I" telling the story and of the "I" who experiences it, at which point the reader is jolted into viewing the youthful protagonist through the eys of the omniscient narrator. With this double vision Tolstoy underscores not only the differences in levels of awareness but also the atemporal nature of consciousness. Dreamy experiences of the child are matched against the more alert responses of the narrator; and because of the narrative standpoint, the fully developed protagonist is present in the beginning, rendering a truer, fuller psychological portrait than would otherwise be possible. In letting the protagonist relate his own experience, to mirror life's procession as well as participate in it, Tolstoy lends his portrayal an added psychological dimension.

All of Tolstoy's stories written before 1862 were creative experiments. They have a direct bearing on his inner development and furnish, in effect, "illustrations" for his autobiography. Except for the war stories, there is little or no repetition in the choice of subject, and each story is written in a new form and from a new point of view. The protagonist in each, however, is motivated to examine his life. He asked probing questions, first in a dialogue with himself ("Do I hate what happened to me just now or do I love it?" [*Boyhood*]) and later in a dialogue with his environment. The young landowner of "A Landowner's Morning" talks to his peasants to find out what he is doing wrong, but they resist him and will not talk. This has only apparent similarity to a theme of sentimentalism (the shrewd country folk's mistrust of the sophisticated), in which wise nature comes to replace ill-advised bourgeois morals as protectress and guide. In Tolstoy's works nature, including natural man, is inherently opposed to culture. It resists efforts of human intellect to infuse it with meaning and obstinately remains as it is—in an unconscious state. It does not lend itself to an invasion and conquest by intellect. It is hostile to the self-conscious civilized man whom it treats as an outsider, an alien. In Tolstoy's first full-length novel, *The Cossacks* (1862), Olenin flees civilization to embrace

primeval nature in the Caucasus. He hopes to be reborn by the process of immersing himself in the rejuvenating flood of warm, simple humanity. But instead of thriving in a medium of Rousseauesque permissiveness, he undergoes a psychological crisis and must flee. His attempts to penetrate the self-contained world of the cossack mountaineers end in dismal failure. He is unable to establish a meaningful relationship with any of them, and his eagerness only increases the difficulties. In the end everyone is relieved to see him go away. Attempts by a self-conscious civilized man to "cultivate" the natural man, within or without his natural habitat, provide the subjects of several of Tolstoy's stories. In each of these, efforts to achieve moral growth are translated into attempts to improve upon nature according to urban values. Tolstoy's war stories illustrate this theme from a different point of view. Here the determined efforts of the civilized man to act on his artificial standards during combat derange his self-conscious mind, whereas the natural, instinctive man adjusts to these extraordinary conditions more easily and sanely because he merely reacts, without much conscious effort. In the stories the natural dignity and heroism of common soldiers is juxtaposed with the unnatural and cowardly behavior of officers, their paltry vanity, ambition, hypocrisy, and lack of character in the face of death.

The war stories also explore another one of Tolstoy's major ideas: the notion that the "chaos" of experience is not a problem in metaphysics but rather a psychological experience, a problem of incomplete consciousness. Tolstoy suggests that the elements of experience are not really incongruous but merely appear so to the lopsidedly inward-oriented, excessively self-conscious mind of a rational, civilized man. He depicts war objectively in these stories, using the techniques of the physiological sketch, as an ugly, senseless slaughter, and does not attempt moral judgment. Instead, Tolstoy hints that all this may have an altogether different meaning, that the significant aspects of reality and the important work of nature go on in man and nature in ways that are hidden from the intellect. This is the "unseen hand" of which other writers of the time (e.g., Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*) spoke, that rather tired, forced poetical image of a huge ghostly arm that supposedly led their protagonists toward happier goals, in terms quite characteristic of the humdrum, prosaic style of the Age of Enlightenment.[23] These works also reflect a distrust of the church, an at-

titude that was widespread in the eighteenth century but had appeared sporadically long before, apparently with the impact of literacy, in dreams about a churchless Christianity (Boehme, Stilling, St. Martin, the Quakers). The eighteenth-century rationalist, in many ways an acutely self-conscious man who was painfully aware of the pitfalls of human reasoning, preferred to rely on his own reason or the guidance of a depersonalized spirit, rather than trust the reasoning of his elders. In the rationalistic mind an anonymous power replaced the church, the sacred society of the past, and the only higher order left was that of a personal intellect or a depersonalized spirit; but the nature of this invisibly effective higher intellect must be grounded, ultimately, in the religious attitudes of the author himself. Tolstoy revealed his view in *War and Peace,* where he speaks of a higher, nonhuman intelligence arranging the affairs of man and nature, against which all efforts and schemes of paltry human intellect to fathom its design are ineffectual. Some critics have interpreted this as a repudiation of reason by Tolstoy, but that interpretation is incorrect. Tolstoy merely insisted on a greater reliance on feeling and other archaic modes of thinking such as intuition. He was opposed to the idea (grounded in eighteenth-century rationalism) that the powers of intellect were supreme and unlimited, and he portrayed reason as clumsy and ineffective whenever it becomes too self-reliant. Conversely, he also depicted the older, more natural modes of thought as inadequate when one is dealing with the highly structured, artificial world of culture. Thus, he suggested a productive and organic union of opposites—reason and intuition. This theme parallels his idea of a synthesis of nature and culture in the consciousness of man.

Tolstoy, whose positions—like those of other Russian thinkers—are characterized by a certain degree of organicism (which was an offshoot of German romanticism), came to see consciousness as a product of growth and assimilation: a gradual realization of intellect and its embodiment in nature. The notion seems to echo the Gnostic legend about Nous who became trapped in Physis after seeing his own reflection in it. According to Tolstoy, consciousness grew by feeding upon nature—becoming progressively more aware of it, sinking, so to speak, its roots into nature. The process had its ups and downs. It passed though what can be loosely described as a polarity, to an intensification, and eventually a rhythmic resolution, moving, as it were, from thesis to antithesis,

toward a grand synthesis of antinomies. A harmonious association between a growing, rational ego and the irrational, life-giving nonego, individual intellect and common nature, then, was a prerequisite for healthy growth, but this condition was initially absent when the intellect first realized itself by becoming aware of itself as a thing apart from, and thus opposed to, nature. At this stage efforts to control reality would result in hostility, a violent confrontation, a virtual state of war with nature, because of an excessive use of logic and analysis is that interfered with understanding (synthesis). Eventually, of course, growing awareness, patience, and a better understanding of the ways of nature would bring about a more productive, peaceful association. Thus war and peace were fundamental concepts for Tolstoy. It can even be said that war as an initial confrontation and peace as a resolution of conflict were, for Tolstoy, not so much objective conditions, social and historical concepts, as psychological states in the mind of a protagonist. The sequence also reflects the idea that all genuine transitions in life tend to be crises or sicknesses that must be resolved eventually through the good will of the protagonist. In time Tolstoy came to believe that genuine integration of intellect with nature was at best problematic. He found nature and culture to be not really compatible outside of man, other than as a corruption of nature in the form of civilization. Culture, he concluded, was a strictly internal matter, akin to religion—a state of mind, to be achieved successfully only within man's consciousness. What was adumbrated here by Tolstoy was a composite idea that prefigured modern existentialism and to which Sartre has referred in different contexts as "bad faith": in essence, that an individual must avoid falling into stereotyped behavior if he is to retain his integrity, a necessity for growth (in psychological terms, this is the Jungian persona that, developed to excess, is seen as preventing the individual from growing, even though in practice it assures him of social recognition and personal success). Tolstoy's writings present a record of his gradual realization of this complex idea.

In Tolstoy's works we can observe a number of developments that are strikingly different from those in the fairy-tale world of conventional fiction, including the novel of education. In fact, the experience of the Tolstoyan hero traces a curve diametrically opposed to that of the sentimental hero who, after sowing his wild oats, can nearly always count on being accepted back into society

Tolstoy dispenses completely with this staple of popular fiction whereby the author eases the reader at the end into an imaginary frame of mind about a world that is essentially, and comfortably, at peace with itself. It is important to recognize that these deep-seated changes in outlook dramatized in the Tolstoyan hero represent a very different point of view on society and the world. At an age when the sentimental hero prepares to marry and establish himself in society, the Tolstoyan hero only begins his adventures (for example, Pierre Bezukhov and Konstantin Levin). From a conventional background, his path leads him directly to the loneliness of a confrontation with himself. He is an awkward, passive man, wandering about, intensely preoccupied with himself. Living alone with his thoughts, he experiences a virtual breakdown on all levels of existence—within and without himself, psychologically as well as socially, accompanied by an alarming recognition of the tenuousness of individual life. And if this were not enough, he experiences a crisis of consciousness, which is identified with conscience. He is torn between a nagging sense of obligation to the soil and his socially defined position of master of the land. He therefore experiences a sense of guilt, because he blames himself for unthinkingly squandering the labor of his peasants. Indeed, it is this debt, in all senses of the word, that exerts such a moral influence on him. His thoughts often take on a moralizing tone, but he feels he has nowhere to turn, and his isolation leads him to a radical revision of all his standards. His goal may, in fact, become a desire to sublimate his earthly passions into a more permanent condition, a love that is directed only toward an infinite God. In the case of some Tolstoyan protagonists, we can actually point to the specific moment at which this development commences. In *War and Peace* Pierre Bezukhov turns to Freemasonry after experiencing a marital reverse. In *The Cossacks* Olenin, plagued by financial troubles and guilt, decides to take a drastic step: he isolates himself by setting out on the road to Caucasus, to become morally and psychologically regenerated there.

The Tolstoyan protagonist is intensely preoccupied with himself. He is convinced that his consciousness is the real center of experience, the place where opposites meet: events within and events without fused into an organic whole. His state of mind, his own psychological condition, is therefore more important to him than any objective conditions. Whatever misfortunes befall him he treats

them as passing incidents, never blaming the environment, only himself, and experiencing a concomitant chronic dissatisfaction with himself. In place of a sentimental education, the Tolstoyan protagonist suffers a series of severe moral jolts. Morbid reflection and a desire for self-improvement plague him constantly. The condition periodically resolves itself in crises of consciousness. The crisis is triggered by disillusionment with himself, reality, and life's ideals, which appear empty and false. He becomes a brooding, solitary figure who mistrusts his own judgment, thinks he has lost touch with reality because of his excessive reliance on rational thought, and tries to come to terms with this somber realization as best he can. He believes that his feeling, his own nature, and truth stand in opposition to his reason, which he suspects of being too structured and therefore unreliable. He continues to search vigorously for truth and objective proof, which he believes to be hidden somewhere in surrounding reality. He devises rules of conduct to help himself be guided through the maze of conflicting experiences. He adopts a number of standards that, often as not, are based upon nothing more than feeling, are inadequately defined, and must eventually be replaced. One such standard is the early Tolstoyan ideal of womanhood as the wise, eternally feminine world soul endowed with absolute characteristics: an indestructible "she" who is the preserver of virtue, the family, and a model of self-sacrifice (the image ends with *War and Peace*). This ceaseless search for permanent standards is paralleled by another tendency—to seek out and destroy false ideals, transient standards of conduct that are not based on anything more substantial than convention—say, the aristocratic standard of comme il faut that Tolstoy rejected once he found it wanting in substance. In all this frenetic moral activity and search for truth, analysis figures prominently. Ideals and preconceived notions are examined closely; they collide with logic but analysis does not destroy faith, it only forces the protagonist to examine further his ideals. Thus one set of standards is periodically replaced by another. This cyclic development has a vibrant intensity to it that lends the author-protagonist's life a compelling sense of dramatic realism, of social and psychological growth.

Tolstoy's works reflect the trend toward secularization in religious fiction, particularly in the didactic and the confessional genres. The predecessors of the Tolstoyan protagonist were not

foolish men of action and adventure like Don Quixote, but self-conscious men of reflection. Tolstoy drew on the rise in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of secularized forms of pietistic literature, the fusion of which was accomplished in the sentimental novel of education. He made it more complex by combining it with romanticism's interest in the phenomena of consciousness and memory. These are the central themes of his works, upon which both the author and the protagonist reflect a great deal. The confessor, because of his fascination with inner states of the self and his past, often merges with the figure of the author. His orientation inward causes him to reassess his values, ponder life and death, doubt immortality, and lose hope of reconciling ideals with reality. His growing self-consciousness progressively "demythologizes" God: from a powerful parental figure projected outside to a mere subjective feeling and eventually an illusion. This development is paralleled by a corresponding development: a decrease in the role of the omniscient narrator and a corresponding rise in importance of the neurotic protagonist who takes over his function. The protagonist becomes the author's double, who represents him by taking over his psychological crises. In this way the cathartic act of writing enables the author to dispense with projecting his problems outside, and yet to detach himself from them, and thus come objectively to terms with himself and his own past. By making the protagonist his own shadow and burdening him with his unresolved problems of adaptation to the modern world, the author deals with them more objectively, and hence effectively, than if he confronted these problems directly within himself. Thus, the protagonist, although indubitably an important figure in Tolstoy's fiction, is not independent and therefore not the most important. Ultimately Tolstoy reserves that role for himself. In short, the one person who really grows is the author himself.

The development of the Tolstoyan protagonist reflects one of the most significant developments in modern fiction: the gradual internalization and psychologization of reality, in contrast to older conventional genres where the protagonist projected himself outside. Such turning inward on the part of the protagonist to examine his reactions to his surroundings, rather than to deal with them in a direct confrontation, signals the change in the nineteenth century toward psychological forms of fiction. The author is no longer content to describe what he sees. Rather than picture the

infinite variety of life's panorama, he turns inward to consult his own mind about what it all means to him, to dwell on it and to reflect, catching every distortion as it is mirrored in his consciousness. In this sense Tolstoy's works, although they can be said to reflect, as a whole, the autobiographical trend in nineteenth-century fiction, represent its most modern psychological form. Tolstoy depicts psychological man, whose heightened impressions and alienation from his surroundings stem not from social or economic factors but from inner tensions: an increased inwardness and self-consciousness and a profound change in his manner of thinking.

Let us now review the findings of this chapter. We have adopted a hypothesis that literature—aside from its effect upon the conscious mind as a carrier of information—is also a recognizable technique and a complicated convention that sets up unconscious motions and reflexes that significantly alter patterns of perception and thinking. The Russian intellectuals were aware of some changes in their thinking caused by their European education. But they failed to understand that literacy, i.e., the form of literature, had more to do with this development than its content. The oral mode of communciation is expressed in a given kind of language with a given kind of syntax. Literature proposes a different kind of language and a different syntax. What is overlooked is the fact that the first language is based on one kind of thinking, which we may call symbolic, whereas the second language is based on another kind of thinking, which we will call logical. And it proposes to substitute a different state of mind, the literate, which would be central to the experience of new Russia. So it was the form, and not the content, of education that had changed the thinking of Russian intellectuals to the point of being unintelligible to the common folk. The common folk, being illiterate, still thought in circular, archaic patterns, in symbols, analogies, and iconic concepts, and could not follow the logic of the intellectual who was trained to think sequentially, in abstractions and analytical concepts. It was because of this change in the pattern of his thinking, and not because of any changes in its content—his superior education—that he became a stranger among his own people, a "superfluous man." The error of Russian critics was in not taking this change in thinking into account, assigning it any kind of importance. The aesthetes among the critics, being interested in verbal structures, were aware of this

phenomenon, Still, they were too preoccupied with the aesthetic effect of the written word to note its psychological effect. (The root of the matter lies, of course, in the phenomenologists' assumption of an existence of an information content separable from its given form.) But it was the position of the civic critics that was widest of the mark. They thought that only the message of literature was important. In effect, critics did not believe that literacy as such had any significant effect on the mind, and they continued to believe that it was information that was important. This strictly rational, logical, abstract conception of the effects of literacy was the numb stance of the psychologically naïve intellectuals of the day who did not understand the workings of the mind.

By contrast, Tolstoy was fascinated with the workings of his mind, and subjected them to a thorough rational analysis. Thus, what has been called Tolstoy's social intransigence was a psychological acuteness that appeared as a constant quest for innovation, evolving from the naturalism of his early sketches to the realm beyond it—the psychological realism of the inner monologue. This realism is both the sign of an extraordinary literary awareness and a perfectly consistent statement of his poetic and ideological vision of the human predicament as at once an inner and an outer experience of thinking and doing, which each deny the other, yet whose paradoxes assert the individual's freedom. Tolstoy, it seems, tried to show that this awareness was a new condition, an altered state of consciousness in man: the realization of a self that is at odds with itself; a permanently unstable condition that continuously violates its own system, often results in an inner split, and reconstitutes itself in the dialectics of thought and action. It is clear that this kind of interpretation of reality and analytical approach to literature was advanced for his time.

In summary, then, it can be said that the critics rejected Tolstoy's ideas because they disagreed with his interpretation of current events. The more thoughtful of the critics certainly comprehended something of his message. But because his conclusions did not support their own brand of social philosophy, they attacked him, not out of malice, but merely from the instinct of self-preservation. His inward-directed, psychological message was too new. It contained little that would recommend it to the radicals of his time, who were still immersed in rational man's strictly outward-directed wars with the environment. The radical critics were thoroughly preoccupied

with social issues from which—in the spirit of the eighteenth century—they expected answers to all of man's problems.

It is thus easy to see that Russian criticism differs considerably from Western criticism. Russian critics are preoccupied with meaning, whereas Western critics tend to avoid reporting the content of literature and tend to emphasize its elements of artifice. Russian criticism imposes an extraliterary schematism on literature, a sort of sociopolitical color filter that makes some writers leap into prominence and shows up others as dark and faulty. This preoccupation with meaning and its resulting judgments usually meet resistance in the Western reader. Of course I do not doubt that the search for meaning occurs also in Western criticism, for we too have critics who glimpse ultimate cultural goals and spare themselves no pains to draw near to them. But our goals are different. We have a nonfunctional conception of literature that it is an art and not an instrument of indoctrination, and that therefore its content and quality must be judged first by criteria that are aesthetic. This approach is logical, perhaps necessary, in a relatively stable culture such as ours, wherein literary performance has become divorced from the day's business. In Russia, however, literature is still part of daily life, reflecting changes in it that are sometimes as drastic as those that occurred in Europe during the Renaissance. The problems and issues that preoccupy Russian critics sound very strange to us. There is little in our civilization to foster strivings like theirs, not even in literary criticism, the custodian of cultural values. The insistence on the significance of message points up the need to approach the work of Russian critics with a particularly open and discerning mind. Whether the critical principles enunciated by the critics were valid or not, the fact is that they influenced both the form and content of Tolstoy's work. Thus an understanding of what he achieved often depends on an acquaintance with the critical doctrines he and his contemporaries assumed to be the foundations of art. We need to know their norms because they represent a system of coherent values that may enrich our experience of literature and be useful to understanding Tolstoy. Without such knowledge we lack objectivity in reading his works and rely on a modern Western point of view, with its own limitations and prejudices. A good example of this is Georg Lukács's position, which asserts that "in purely artistic terms Tolstoy's novels are novels of disillusionment carried to an extreme, a baroque version of Flaubert's form":

> Tolstoy himself, it is true, occupies a dual position. From the point of view purely of form (a point of view which, in Tolstoy's special case, cannot possibly do justice to what matters most in his vision or in his created world), he must be seen as the final expression of European Romanticism. However, in the few overwhelmingly great moments of his works—moments which must be seen as subjective and reflexive in respect of each particular work as a whole—he shows a clearly differentiated, concrete, and existent world, which, if it could spread into a totality, would be completely inaccessible to the categories of the novel and would require a new form of artistic creation: the form of the renewed epic.
>
> This world is the sphere of pure soul-reality in which man exists as man, neither as a social being nor as an isolated, unique, pure, and therefore abstract interiority. If ever this world should come into being as something natural and simply experienced, as the only true reality, a new complete totality could be built out of all its substances and relationships. It would be a world to which our divided reality would be a mere backdrop, a world which would have outstripped our dual world of social reality by as much as we have outstripped the world of nature. But art can never be an agent of such a transformation: the great epic is a form bound to the historical moment, and any attempt to depict the utopian as existent can only end in destroying the form, not in creating reality. The novel is the form of the epoch of absolute sinfulness, as Fichte said, and it must remain the dominant form so long as the world is ruled by the same stars. In Tolstoy, intimations of a breakthrough into a new epoch are visible; but they remain polemical, nostalgic, and abstract.[24]

The Tolstoy criticism presented in the body of this book has thus two aims: (1) to describe the current problems as seen by the critics and Tolstoy's reaction to them; and (2) to suggest that critics misread Tolstoy because they did not understand him: they were too spellbound by their own ideas to understand the innovative author.

THE EARLY RADICAL CRITICS

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, Russian universities were flooded with rude young men of odd backgrounds who were eager to apply themselves to important issues. They were called the *raznochintsy*. Most came from the lower strata of the archaic Russian society and had been economically underprivileged. Many had a clerical background, which may have encouraged them to consider themselves the new intellectual elite. It is not inconceivable that, belonging to the priestly class, they felt, perhaps unconsciously, called upon to provide the new generation of intellectual leaders of society. They were critical of the performance of the old leaders and impatient with what the government was doing to improve the economic conditions of the Russian people: they accused the government of catering only to the needs of the ruling class. They thus stood in natural opposition to the Slavophiles, most of whom belonged to the old nobility and whose goals the radicals attacked as dated, utopian, and naïve.

These rude young men, although they were dubbed radicals and nihilists, actually subscribed to a fairly moderate doctrine of political liberalism that included most of the current ideals of humanists. The major radicals, such as Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov, called themselves materialists, however, to indicate that they felt no need for speculative philosophy, having found answers to the principal questions of life in the scientific discoveries of the Darwinian

era. They rejected metaphysics entirely, but for all their utilitarianism they were idealists with unlimited faith in science and the power of reason. They wanted magic formulas for the rapid solution of social ills, and believed that science could provide these. They actually were romantics of science, with little actual or precise knowledge of it. They were fascinated with the progress of Russia that they thought would follow from the spread of their ideas. So, eager to civilize backward old Russia, they practically ignored formal sophistication in art and pressed for the rapid growth of a new literature representing their theories. They granted considerable freedom to writers who were struggling to express these in literature, declaring questions of artistic form to be largely matters of taste. Dobroliubov, for example, asserted that a writer may give nothing to art and yet be a remarkable person "for us simply through the direction and meaning of his works."[1] So, their requirement of artists and writers was that they pursue useful ideas, and that these ideas be made clear and unequivocal. The emphasis on direction and meaning (i.e., sequentiality) instead of artistic qualities signifies the tendency among the progressives to escape the circular, paradoxical mode of traditional (symbolic) thinking by learning to think logically, like civilized people. The reason that so few radical critics wrote about Tolstoy, and that their work on him is, on the whole, negligible, is that they could not see any of their ideas reflected in his work.

The comments of radical critics on Tolstoy are fairly numerous, but most are undistinguished, characterized by a petty, uninspired, argumentative approach, by hostility and sarcasm. Tolstoy was blamed for aristocratic elitism, for ignoring important issues in his work. Except for Chernyshevsky and Pisarev, few prominent radicals ever wrote more than a few lines about Tolstoy, because they either died too soon (V. G. Belinsky [1811–48]) or were not interested enough (Dobroliubov). A. I. Herzen's (1812–70) comments appear limited to one published letter in which he alludes to prince Andrei Bolkonsky of *War and Peace* in rather romantic terms, describing him as a nobleman made of the stuff from which folk heroes are made and a potential Decembrist.[2] Another prominent radical (who actually launched Tolstoy on his career by publishing several of his early works), the civic poet and chief editor of the *Contemporary* N. A. Nekrasov (1821–78), published a few paragraphs in the *Contemporary* in which he commented on the quality

and potential of Tolstoy's work. He praised Tolstoy's unusual gift of narrative as likely to change a few generic traditions, such as the traditional manner of depicting war,[3] but urged Tolstoy to turn his talent to important issues. He named Tolstoy, along with Turgenev for his recently published *Sportsman's Sketches*, as a pioneer of a new realistic genre. He declared himself impressed wth a quality of "controlled power" that he found "evenly distributed and spilling over everywhere" in Tolstoy's stories. But he objected to Tolstoy's faulty style and carelessness in structuring his stories, which made some of them come out as sketches rather than finished works of literary art.[4] Nekrasov's comments were thus considerably more formal than was customary for other radical critics and commentators who would confine themselves to discussion of issues, a practice that prevented them from making any statement at all about Tolstoy if they could not find enough issues to discuss. And it is clear that Tolstoy's novel technique of intensive analysis was not sufficiently utilitarian to compensate most radical critics for the absence in his works of what they valued most in a work of literature—civic issues. Therefore they tended to dismiss, condemn, or ignore Tolstoy as an irrelevant and unimportant writer.

CHERNYSHEVSKY

The author of the *Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality* (1855) and the epoch-making novel *What Is to Be Done?* (1863), Nikolai G. Chernyshevsky (1828–89) was one of the three leading Russian radicals who pioneered the socially minded, utilitarian criticism (the other two were Belinsky and Dobroliubov). For the most part he wrote on issues only peripherally related to literature, and literary criticism constitutes only a minor part of his output. And yet his influence in literary matters was, in the 1850s, almost as great as that of Belinsky a decade earlier, and he determined in many respects the views and attitudes of others in the field. The great weight and authority of his opinion encouraged them to pay close attention to everything he wrote; and he persuaded other critics to follow him.[5]

Chernyshevsky's contribution to criticism of Tolstoy is not large. Apart from a few casual remarks here and there, his criticism of Tolstoy's fiction is confined to two articles written within a few weeks. These articles, however, had a significant influence on the appreciation of Tolstoy's work and more or less set the tone of subsequent criticism about Tolstoy.[6] One of these articles dealt with

Childhood, Boyhood, and the war stories;[7] the other is a review of *Youth*, "A Landowner's Morning," and a few others.[8] As a literary analysis the former is more important. It represents the first authoritative attempt by a leading critic to assess Tolstoy as a writer and to define his new technique of pervasive analysis into the psychological frame of mind of his characters. Although it had been acclaimed as keen, psychologically astute, and artistically effective,[9] the method defied understanding by more conventional minds, and thus it was frequently attacked as either pointless, meaningless, or excessive.[10] Chernyshevsky's groundbreaking article, however, stands at the head of a considerable body of research into the question of the artistic and psychological effectiveness of Tolstoy's inner monologue, relative to similar techniques employed by other writers. Subsequent Soviet scholars have drawn parallels between, and compared the methods of, Tolstoy and Chekhov,[11] Dostoevsky and Pushkin,[12] Lermontov,[13] Flaubert,[14] Stendhal,[15] and Joyce.[16] In the 1930's Driagin[17] and Vitenson[18] debated about "psychologism as a valid literary method"; Anan'ev and I. V. Strakhov made thorough scientific studies of the inner monologue as a source for psychological investigations. They analyzed its structure[19] or examined its technique as a means of studying dreams[20] and the unconscious.[21]

Chernyshevsky's articles probably helped Tolstoy cope with an adverse critical climate that developed against him in the 1850s following an initially favorable reaction. In 1852, when Tolstoy's first published work, "The Story of My Childhood," appeared in the leading radical journal, the *Contemporary*, he was greeted as a fresh new talent of whom bigger and better things were expected immediately.[22] Press reviews noted a pleasing lack of artificiality, an entertaining narrative manner,[23] and psychological skill.[24] However, by 1854 Tolstoy was being criticized for disparity between form and content.[25] Reproaches developed into accusations, charges of immoderate use of analysis[26] on the one hand, irrelevance on the other. Failure on Tolstoy's part to introduce topical material was sometimes interpreted as gross triviality,[27] or as a lack of ideas,[28] thought, content,[29] or orientation.[30] It appears that Chernyshevsky wrote his articles to stem the tide of adverse criticism that was beginning to well up against Tolstoy among the civic critics. Chernyshevsky delivered several well-aimed blows at the more unreasonable accusations, with arguments designed to de-

fend Tolstoy on grounds of common sense as well as those of artistic integrity. When writing about childhood, Chernyshevsky said, one wrote about children who are not expected to care about civic questions.[31] He himself, however, rarely missed an opportunity to encourage Tolstoy to take a stand on civic issues whenever this was thematically appropriate. In his review of "A Landowner's Morning," Chernyshevsky praised Tolstoy for the realistic depiction of peasants as part of their natural environment, without undue sentimentality and without trying to hide the peasants' basic faults.[32] He interpreted this as a sign of Tolstoy's changing, widening outlook. Chernyshevsky apparently assumed that there was enough room for such questions also within the design of *Youth,* and was disappointed not to find them adequately treated there. In a letter to the editor of the *Contemporary*, Nekrasov, he referred to *Youth* as "decidedly weaker than *Childhood* and *Boyhood*, though perhaps a piece not altogether bad."[33] He must have had his second thoughts about it, however, for a month later he irately condemned it privately in a letter to Turgenev as "a rotten product of the pure art school" headed by his ideological opponent, Druzhinin.[34] Yet, in the meantime he was lavishly praising Tolstoy for his growing interest in civic issues in an article designed for public consumption.[35] This fact suggests, if anything, a certain protective bias, which I will deal with later in this chapter.

Chernyshevsky's style leaves much to be desired. He is verbose and tends to belabor the point. When ready to deliver a major critical opinion he stalls, patronizes the reader, meanders, repeats himself, and delivers a circuitous argument—as though he were reluctant to part with his precious piece of information. Nevertheless, he sometimes delivers a succinct and memorable pronouncement and, on the whole, evinces remarkable insight into the work and acumen in predicting Tolstoy's future development as a writer.

In the first article Chernyshevsky evidently tried to improve Tolstoy's sagging prestige with the other critics. He forthrightly pointed out the virtues he found in Tolstoy, both as a man and an artist, and invited his readers to become aware of these features. Chernyshevsky claimed that Tolstoy had two outstanding characteristics: (1) a quality of "moral wholesomeness,"[36] and (2) an unusual sagacity and sensitivity in regard to the secret working of the human psyche. The latter, Chernyshevsky presumed, must have come from an abiding interest in following the twists and turns of

what he chose to describe "for lack of a better term" as "dialectic of the soul [mind]"—an only partly verbalized inner debate by means of incompletely formed and undifferentiated thought-feelings, expressed and communicated with the novel device Chernyshevsky termed an inner monologue. He then proceeded to explain the device as a technique and a means of revealing the genesis of feeling and consciousness.

Chernyshevsky claimed that the uniqueness of Tolstoy's new method lay in his ability to depict the stream of consciousness. Tolstoy, he said, had developed a radically new technique that departed from the usual method of dissecting feeling. Chernyshevsky granted that psychological analysis as such did not originate with Tolstoy, that outstanding writers—for example, Lermontov—knew how to convey the flow of thoughts with fair success; but Lermontov's method, Chernyshevsky said, quoting a few lines, had limitations. When he, or another of these writers, wanted to analyze a feeling, he would break it down into a series of component sensations, producing thereby something that was, in substance, an "anatomical chart" of emotion. Transitions of feelings were depicted with a series of individual pictures, catching moments of dramatic change. All such techniques dealt with action and conflict, that is, with the results rather than the essence of the psychic process: "One poet is interested above all in the delineation of characters; another, in the influence of social factors and life conflicts on characters; a third, in the connection between emotions and actions; a fourth, in an investigation of passion; but Count Tolstoy is interested primarily in the psychic process per se, its forms and laws, the *dialectic of the mind*, to give it a definite name."[37] Chernyshevsky asserted that these older techniques explained neither the changes in nor the growth of emotion. Analysis, the principle of separation by differentiation as such, excluded the understanding of growth as an organic change. The mechanical device of putting fragmented parts into a series produced only a semblance of growth. There was no coherence or principle of causality in a mere sequence, Chernyshevsky said; that one feeling followed another accounted for nothing and showed only change inducing change. Tolstoy's new method was thus infinitely more modern and sophisticated, in that it went to the core of the process, rather than describe its periphery. It replaced all such old-

fashioned *static* systems with a new, *dynamic* differential approach, since Tolstoy dealt with the very nature of change within the psyche. He reproduced, Chernyshevsky wrote, the infinitesimal value differences between consecutive thoughts and feelings. By noting incremental differences that accrued in the same thought, he focused attention on the continuous, fluxional changes in the psychic process, its laws, its logic, its own peculiar dialectic: the subliminal evolutions and convolutions of thoughts and feelings as they are conceived, gestate, and grow within the womb of the psyche. Tolstoy depicted their mutations with sequences of freely developing patterns of thought associations that occurred on the boundary between fact and fancy with kaleidoscopic ease and variety:

> Tolstoy's attention is turned above all to the way in which one complex of thought-feelings derives from another. He is interested in observing how an emotion, arisen spontaneously from a given situation or impression, undergoes an influence from memories, succumbs so that it combines with similar thoughts supplied by the imagination, merges into other thought-feelings, returns again to its point of departure and wanders on and on along the entire chain of recollections; how a primary sensation becomes a thought-feeling by the process of augmentation: it generates thoughts that carry it on and on, collecting on the way and fusing with dreams, past experiences, anticipations of the future, and reflections about the present. [Pp. 54–55]

> He is a great master of portraying the elusive manifestations of inner life that succeed one another with extraordinary rapidity and inexhaustible variety. There are painters who are celebrated for their special skill in catching the flickering reflection of a ray of sunshine on swiftly rolling waves, the trembling of sunlight on rustling leaves, its play on shifting shapes of clouds. One says of such painters that they know how to capture the life of nature. Count Tolstoy does something similar with regard to the most mysterious movements of psychic life. Of all the remarkable Russian writers, he is the only master of this art. [P. 58]

With this technique, Chernyshevsky went on, Tolstoy managed to reach into the deepest recesses of the human psyche, even probe the mind of a man moments before his death; and such inner monologue was very different from the monologues of characters like Hamlet, who simply split in two and argued with himself. Hamlet's soliloquies, by comparison, were really more like dialogues,

and belonged, generically, with other dialogues that represent dramatizations of split personality, as do the dialogues between Dr. Faustus and Mephistopheles, or Marquis de Posa and Don Carlos.

It should be clear, Chernyshevsky argued, that one had here something very unusual, a skill quite without parallel in all literature, not to speak of contemporary literature—a special quirk of talent that was unique and original. And unless one appreciated this feat, he really should not try to assess Tolstoy as a writer. Although other writers might possess a greater skill with words, or brilliance of style, these accomplishments were superficial when compared with the understanding and profound implications produced by such intensive analysis. Since no one else could achieve it, Tolstoy deserved special credit and consideration.

Chernyshevsky went on to say that it may have been this skill that retarded Tolstoy's developing awareness of important social issues and his proficiency in writing about them. This skill was not acquired by Tolstoy without much hard work, by a process that was likely to have distracted his attention from observing others while he was busy concentrating on himself. Yet, this was just the point of the important difference: although one could learn to describe the *results* of emotion from observing others, this kind of an in-depth analysis and familiarity with the inner life and workings of the psyche could only be acquired through relentless observation of one's self. Nevertheless, once acquired, this skill enabled Tolstoy to discern character, motivation, and play of emotions, conflicts of passion, and such happenings as they occurred within his characters with a facility unmatched by anyone else.

The other virtue of Tolstoy's art that Chernyshevsky proclaimed to have substantive importance was its wholesomeness. He had apparent difficulty in describing what he meant, but evidently considered it significant enough to warrant a lengthy roundabout explanation of its exact nature. He began as he did in explaining the nature of the inner monologue—by defining first what it was *not*. It was not, he said, some kind of purism—a purity of moral sentiment acquired or reconstructed after many years of suffering and clarification of consciousness by adversity—but the unsullied pristine wholesomeness of youth. "Some people," he said, "acquire moral purity by growth and experience, a cruel and protracted process of self-denial and suffering that clarifies one's mind and conscience by reflection. They become pure as a result of many tests, after a long

struggle with numerous temptations, perhaps after a series of falls. This is hardly the case with Count Tolstoy. His moral fiber had not been restored to him through arduous effort in years of reflection and experience. It is the unsullied, pristine wholesomeness of youth, preserved intact in all its youthful spontaneity and freshness" (p. 60). To Chernyshevsky this quality of tenderness provided Tolstoy's stories with an inimitable graceful charm and compensated for the deficiencies in some of Tolstoy's unsuccessful experimental pieces. This quality had an invigorating, regenerative, healing effect, he said, compared to that of communing directly with nature. Works such as *Childhood* and *Boyhood* could not have been conceived, let alone executed, without this element. "The Notes of a Billiard Marker" Chernyshevsky decried as a "shocking tale of utter human degradation" that would have lost a major part of its shock value without the implied contrast between the author's wholesome values and the protagonist's thoroughly depraved outlook on life. The gist of Chernyshevsky's somewhat maudlin and involved argument was that critics should indeed take note that they were dealing with the first steps in literature of an apparently very great talent: a fresh, inexperienced, and vulnerable young man who so far has delivered only a small token of the rich rewards his pen promised for the future. They should give serious consideration to the possibility that this unusually wholesome young man of rather unique gifts might turn out to be the future hope of Russian letters. They should therefore leave him alone for the time being to experiment with new and unconventional writing techniques, and try not to debauch him with harsh criticism that would only drive him onto the safe and unimaginative path of mediocrity and sterile aestheticism.

Chernyshevsky's attitude indicates, then, a primary concern with protecting Tolstoy, rather than with writing a critical assessment of his work. The impression is unmistakable from the casual, almost offhand manner in which Chernyshevsky coins the now-famous phrase "inner monologue"[38] and almost immediately moves on to the issue of Tolstoy's unusually acute psychological perspicacity that appears to have been, for him, more substantive; he then goes on to discuss the relatively trivial matter of Tolstoy's youthful vulnerability to critical attack. He urgently encouraged Tolstoy to broaden his outlook; was willing to risk his own reputation in promising splendid works from Tolstoy in the future; worried about

damage to this still innocent, yet psychologically astute, young talent; and hinted at his potential for future intellectual leadership on a national scale: all this suggests more than just a touching concern for a young writer's career or even the future of Russian literature. It evinces the familiar, chronic preoccupation of many leading Russian critics and intellectuals with the historic goals of Russia and the mystic concept of a search for a new national sage: a writer of national stature. Furthermore, Chernyshevsky's anxiety for Tolstoy's safety was rooted in another durable peculiarity of the Russian cultural and sociopolitical scene: literature, long before the days of the Soviets, was viewed as an important tool, not only for spreading enlightenment and raising the general level of culture, but for giving direction to the minds of the people as well,[39] and there was a concomitant chronic mistrust of writers as mere men entrusted with such awesome powers[40] by critics who regarded themselves as guardians of the public intellectual domain. Zealous application of these principles often resulted in aggressive or bilious treatment of writers suspected of having erred from the straight and narrow path of optimum public utility.[41] Sensing the developing tide of critical opprobrium toward Tolstoy because of his apparent disinterest in social issues, Chernyshevsky wrote his review.

He was only moderately successful. By the early 1860s the tide had reached sweeping proportions and threatened to curtail Tolstoy's productivity. Many prominent critics had ceased to pay attention to Tolstoy other than to zero in on his pedagogical experiments, of which Chernyshevsky disapproved.[42] Neither Dobroliubov nor M. A. Antonovich (1835–1918) ever deigned to write a single article about Tolstoy.[43] In 1863 the *Contemporary* published a caustic review of *The Cossacks* written by a staff member.[44] *The Cossacks* was described there as "a demonstrative departure on the part of the author from current issues, titled 'a Caucasus story' because it takes place in conveniently remote Caucasus." Tolstoy himself was described as a minor talent of the old school, a glib, superficial observer who, like all writers of the old school, lacked the capacity to change with the times; he was advised to leave the solution of universal problems to bigger talents. Thus, the radicals of the 1860s were prepared to dismiss Tolstoy. A notable exception among them was young Pisarev, who took up the cause of Tolstoy as a valuable writer unduly neglected by his fellow critics.

PISAREV

The nihilist[45] leader of radical Russian *raznochintsy*,[46] Dmitry I. Pisarev (1840–68), wrote three reviews of Tolstoy's fiction,[47] two of them major. This was more than anyone else provided in the same period and would make him a major contributor to the criticism of Tolstoy, were it not for the somewhat curious fact that, despite his enormous influence upon the minds of the young generation of the 1860s, as a literary critic he has had little actual influence. Other critics preferred the staid leadership of Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov, despite the fact that Pisarev had borrowed the position of the one and the method of the other.

Pisarev is unpopular with other critics because of his controversial position on aesthetics: he advocated its destruction. His philosophic, aesthetic, and ideological positions appear to have been far from stable. A figure of considerable controversy from the start, he allied himself with groups and individuals whose views he only partially shared.[48] He doggedly preached an aesthetic theory he himself failed to practice.[49] The phenomenon of Pisarev, the maverick critic, has always interested researchers. Many have tried to unravel the issues and conflicts surrounding this remarkable young man who, for almost a decade, held sway over the intellectual climate of his country[50] without gaining adherents among any of the important people.

His position on aesthetics cost Pisarev the support of the materialist camp.[51] In the Soviet Union even today, although Pisarev is praised for his civic "pathos"[52] and his groundbreaking contributions to the popularization of science and education, his critical methods remain unpopular. Labeled quaint and unworkable, they are kept out of sight, tucked away somewhere on the back shelves of the laboratory of Soviet history.[53] The attitude is exemplified by scant Soviet research into Pisarev's work on Tolstoy. Plotkin[54] and Sorokin[55] barely mention his Tolstoy critiques. Karaban is hardly more thorough, though he draws some parallels between Pisarev's and Tolstoy's views on art,[56] both highly dubious from his point of view. Medynsky[57] and Beliaev[58] both briefly discuss Pisarev's ideas about Tolstoy's pedagogical activities, but take no interest in his critiques of Tolstoy's fiction. Poznansky takes issue with "attempts by Western scholars to represent Pisarev as a popularizer of Tolstoy's pedagogical views."[59] Not one of these Soviet scholars has devoted more than a few pages to Pisarev's work on Tolstoy. The

Soviets, always attuned to a writer's intentions, are only now beginning to appreciate Pisarev's message. They continue to dislike everything he said in connection with form. Jameson's remark that in Russia preoccupation with questions of interpretation ultimately produced formalism,[60] a method the Soviets abhor, suggest at least one of the underlying reasons. The Soviets dislike Pisarev's nonnormative aesthetics because it permits too much "individualism," i.e., freedom of experimentation with form and, ultimately, freedom of thought.

Understanding Pisarev's somewhat peculiar aesthetic views is crucial to the understanding of his critical methods, which otherwise appear whimsical and inconsistent.[61] Yet the underlying reasons are intellectually sound.

Pisarev borrowed from Chernyshevsky the premise that art was only a reflection of reality and, though occasionally superior to reality in appearance, was always inferior to it in substance.[62] He carries this premise to its ultimate, and doubtful, conclusion that art would ultimately disappear from life unless it sustained a useful function. Such a function would be to carry the message of reality in the form of ideas. Otherwise art would eventually be replaced by science as a more accurate reflection of things and would be relegated to life's periphery along with games and other idle pastimes.

Apparently wtihout realizing it, Pisarev believed in the primary reality of ideas. He thought of art and the appreciation of beauty as an experience, and aesthetics as an attempt to regulate aesthetic experience by defining beauty as an idea *in abstracto*. For Pisarev only ideas were permanent. Beauty, on the other hand, was a sensation, i.e., an experience, and art a refinement of sensory experience. Like all sensory experiences, it was subjective, fleeting, and unstable, and existed only while it was felt. To assign it permanent status on a par with ideas was in effect to say that it continued to exist after it had gone. Experiences for Pisarev were not only fleeting and subjective but difficult to share and to repeat. Nothing good could come of attempts to regulate them. Such attempts would only result in the imposition of the tastes of some upon others. Pisarev therefore proposed to do away with all such systems of normative aesthetics and to replace them with individual aesthetic judgment. Everyone should be granted the innocuous pleasure of choosing his own aesthetic experiences, creative or otherwise, according to his own taste. Artists, then, should not be inter-

fered with. However, if they aspired to greatness, they should use their art to convey ideas, and the greatness of an artist depended entirely on the importance of the ideas his art promoted.[63] Hence Pisarev's preference for verbal art as best equipped to accommodate complex ideas.[64]

Pisarev's views on the role of the literary critic followed from his insistence on great ideas. The critic, according to Pisarev, was not to flatter the author's ego, but was to educe and convey the author's message, if there was any. His job was to clear the underbrush away so that another may walk more easily through the forest of ideas. This the critic could do by stressing latent elements of "significant reality" in the author's work, passages that expressed an important idea. Form could be criticized, provided, of course, that the critic knew that he was expressing subjective judgment that was binding on no one else. Otherwise he should refrain from such judgment altogether. For obvious reasons Pisarev scorned trivial information, form without content, beauty without a message, and aesthetic pleasure for its own sake. His interest remained fixed on the nature of the relation of art to reality, which in his treatment became the relation of the intellectual to sensory experience. His idea of reality also seems to have differed considerably from the conventional view.[65]

Pisarev's critiques were consistent with his concepts of criticism. By no means personally indifferent to matters of form, he deliberately refrained from passing judgment and, instead, concentrated on the "real life elements" contained in the work. He treated the work itself as more or less an equivalent of reality or its reflection, and the characters in it as though they lived in real life.[66] With this approach he apparently tried to implement the promotion of "art as a tool of realism," a goal he claimed to have indefatigably pursued all his life.[67] The method agrees with Dubroliubov's concept of "realistic criticism" (*real'naia kritika*), which defines criticism as disclosing reality within the literary work, purged of the author's subjective notions.[68] Complications arise because Pisarev's method also reflects his own development, which was, his assertions to the contrary, a subjective development, a movement away from an objective and toward a subjective contact with reality. Pisarev, in a word, was a modern, psychologically inclined man who tended to reflect external reality inward, instead of projecting himself upon external reality.

In the beginning, however, Pisarev was strongly influenced by Dobroliubov and adhered closely to his principles. His early critiques show a relatively objective, form-conscious approach. At this stage Pisarev interpreted even the author's technique itself as part of objective reality if it had an influence on or enhanced the author's message. But after the 1861 change[69] in his outlook, he abandoned this approach almost completely to discuss the message without regard to technique employed. In the last four years of his life, he gradually intensified his involvement in the process; no longer content with merely explicating the author's message, he would pick out from it only those elements that were in accord with his own message and treat them, not as art, but as elements of a neutral, objective reality that supported his ideas. Dissatisfied with being only a critic, Pisarev, a born educator, wanted to be a writer and teacher himself—a sage. For this purpose he ruthlessly cannibalized the works of the writers he discussed to broadcast his own message and illustrate it with pertinent passages. He arranged the material with little regard for its original context and purpose. At bottom, however, Pisarev's technique was not an unsuccessful application of Dobroliubov's method into an expression of Pisarev's message, so that we see a progressive adulteration of Dobroliubov's practical, materialistic, sociological approach to criticism, his objective method, by Pisarev's subjective ideas and method, which were influenced by philosophic idealism, until in the end both method and message became almost purely Pisarev's. The three reviews of Tolstoy's work that Pisarev wrote illustrate this development. Written at about four- to five-year intervals, they span practically Pisarev's entire career and accurately reflect the evolution of his confused and confusing method.

Considering Pisarev's tender age (nineteen) at the time, his first critique, a review of Tolstoy's short story "Three Deaths," is a remarkable example of a formal analysis. In accordance with Dobroliubov's system, he gave his readers a profile of Tolstoy as a writer and traced the influence of his personality and character in his work:

> On reading these stories it is easy to get a fair idea of the direction in which the author's talent grows. One sees his personal peculiarities and the objects upon which he likes to focus his special attention in the course of his creativity. Tolstoy, we note, is a born psychologist. It should not be difficult to realize this once you remember what are

> the most prominent features of his work, features that, even on the most cursory reading, strike the reader's attention, startle him, and leave an indelible impression on his mind. Among such features are nature scenes that he manages to suffuse with life. They are marked by freshness and concreteness. He has an ability to draw characters who seem taken straight out of life. A bold overall design and a vital quality of the main idea that underlies the work as a whole—such features are common to more or less all our better writers. . . . But in addition to these general characteristics, Tolstoy reveals his own distinctive qualities. No one can further extend analysis, no one can look as deep inside the soul of man as he does, no one pursues with such dogged persistence, with such implacable logic and to the last consequences the secret motives, the most fleeting and, apparently, inconsequential movements within the psyche. He shows how a thought develops and is gradually formed in the mind, what metamorphoses it undergoes, how feeling wells up in the breast, how fancy is engaged and carries the subject from the real world into a world of fantasy, and how, in the midst of vigorous dreaming, reality intrudes, rudely and concretely. . . . these are the motifs that Tolstoy develops with special fondness and brilliant success. ["Tri smerti" (Three deaths), *Sochineniia*, 1:213–14]

It is at once obvious that Pisarev was familiar with Chernyshevsky's review of *Childhood, Boyhood*, and the war stories. His analysis is almost a restatement of its points, including the emphasis given to Tolstoy's unique gift of profound analysis. Pisarev, however, went further, and claimed that this gift was responsible for the choice of the subject matter: "This direction Tolstoy's talent took clearly influenced the choice of subject in the story that we will now discuss with our readers. The author set himself the task of depicting the feelings of a dying person, his attitude toward the things among which he lived and which, in surviving him, form a startling contrast with their natural calm and indifference, to his anxiety—the psychic turmoil that is going on inside his soul" (*Sochineniia*, 1:215). Pisarev speculated that, apparently, Tolstoy's analytical skill had reached a new level of artistic maturity and psychological insight and, consequently, needed a suitable subject: hence a study on the metaphysical subject of death. Pisarev explained how, by the skillful use of contrasts and changing points of view, the author added cohesion to the sketchy story and enhanced its message: "Tolstoy's story consists of three separate sketches barely connected with one another except by the nature of the theme; there is no connecting story line. The author merely depicted three incidents, three deaths, that occurred under different conditions and in different

circumstances and, having pointed up these differences in most vivid colors, proceeded to show us what all these incidents had in common in terms of commonplace phenomena that accompany the destruction of any living organism" (*Sochineniia*, 1:215).

Pisarev said that character analysis itself, that is, the depth of analysis given, became a device to underscore the contrast between the protagonists. One of the protagonists, the dying lady, was described completely from within: "This is a scene that is quite remarkable by the power with which it is expressed, thanks to analysis that is at once profound and psychologically true. It guides our readers through the evolution of a whole series of connected feelings and thoughts: from the beginning one is made aware of the juxtaposition between life and the destruction of life; then we see the hostility of the dying lady toward anything that is alive and well, anything that may cause her to dwell on the hopelessness of her situation and draw conclusions that are disconcerting to her" (*Sochineniia*, 1:217). Between each pair of episodes, Pisarev said, the author changed his approach. The second episode, of the coachman who was dying of the same disease, contained very little subjective description. Here the protagonist was treated entirely as a thing, from the outside, with almost no analysis and, instead, external descriptions. In the third sketch the point of view changed once more, this time to an altogether lower plane, dramatized by the fact that now it was the hand of man that expressed the role of fate to the dying tree. Pisarev pointed out that these changes in approach were deliberate. They effectively signaled the withdrawal by one step at a time from the seat of consciousness, the inner man, and a descent to a lower level of consciousness. The fear of death was strongest where the level of awareness was highest: in the self-conscious, alienated, educated lady. The crude, uncouth coachman, much more integrated with nature, lived with less awareness and, consequently, was much less conscious of death. In the third episode, with the descent to the plant level, awareness of death was practically absent. The death struggle, so prominent in the other two episodes involving human consciousness, was almost entirely subdued. The reader was even tempted to wonder if it were not occurring entirely in the author's own imagination. Yet all three sketches sustained the same startling contrast between life and death, existing side by side, seemingly unaware of each other. And, Pisarev said, there was a suggestion of a possible metaphysical

significance in the total uninvolvement of life with death, which is the case in rude nature.

Clearly under Dobroliubov's influence, Pisarev treated the development of character in the human protagonists in "Three Deaths" as determined by outside circumstances that inexorably molded the patterns of their thoughts and actions. In discussing their differences in behavior, he put the blame squarely on the environment. The meekness and submissiveness of the coachman, which Pisarev saw as the result of a stunted personality development, he pointedly contrasted with the petulant rebelliousness of the lady. However, he said, these were not the controlling factors of their behavior, but were themselves born of the abnormal conditions of their lives. In detailed expositions Pisarev followed step by step the external conditions surrounding each character, drawing parallels and contrasting individual situations. He concluded that the coachman's exhaustion from the hardships of his existence had robbed him of his humanity: he was the victim, and society was guilty of a crime:

> There is no analysis here, not because it would have been too difficult for the author to produce, but because there is nothing to analyze. Look into the soul of the sick coachman depicted by Tolstoy; you will not find among his feelings any strength or impetuousness, or complexity and variety of emotions. You will be appalled to find how downtrodden he appears, how meek and unresponsive. It is a form of docility that at times seems brutish—a docility developed in endless days of monotonous labor, familiar and commonplace suffering every day, and a colorless, perpetually gray, prosaic life-style. This docility expresses itself in the whole personality of the sick coachman: his words and movements, and all his dealings with his environment and the surrounding people. [*Sochineniia*, 1:217]

Pisarev analyzed the effect on the coachman of the meanness of those around him, a callousness produced by brutal lives, as opposed to the consideration shown the ailing lady:

> These forms are determined by the environment in which the action takes place. In the first sketch those who are well show their consideration, express their concern, and merely stop short of changing their own manner and activity for her sake; and yet, this already seems to the sick lady to be offensive indifference, a scoffing at her predicament. Here, on the contrary, the healthy ones grumble at the sick man, begrudge him his very presence, and try to extract from him some advantage for themselves, making his illness and death the subject of various commercial calculations of their own, about which

> they naively consult the sick man himself, never considering, not even wanting to understand, that such conversations may indeed be painful and upsetting to the already strained imagination of the poor wretch. And yet the sick man silently suffers it all and asks for forbearance. [*Sochineniia*, 1:221]

For contrast Pisarev dwelled upon the petty incidents that had a jarring effect upon the lady's overwrought nerves. Her desire to live and to protect herself from the unavoidable menace of death drove her frantic. Her condition was further aggravated by the vexing indifference of those around her who were unable to understand the nature of her anxieties. Pisarev explained that in such a situation even the best elements of a person's character may impel defiance and conflict with others. He refused, therefore, to judge the characters' conduct by conventional standards of moral behavior. Instead, he found society responsible, and for the suffering of the characters he blamed a lack of civilized standards and education:

> Just as in the first sketch one would be hard put to blame the sick lady for her tantrums even though she tends to demand the impossible, so in the second sketch we must not blame the other coachmen for being rude to their comrade: the lady is under stress because of her disease, which compels her to forget everything that is not related to her condition; but they are insufficiently mentally developed to know how to put themselves in place of the sick man. . . . Such individuals can be found in any underdeveloped society where what is respected is not the human individual but incidentals—external trappings such as physical strength, wealth, health, etc. These features of undeveloped societies that are responsible for the stunting of human growth have been brought to the fore in the second sketch. [*Sochineniia*, 1:221]

Pisarev's second article, "Blunders of Immature Thought" (1864), indicates a notable change in his attitude, as attention is directed away from the environment and toward the individual's inner life. Pisarev discusses environmental influences in generalities, but examines psychological effects upon the individual in much greater detail than before. The conflict between dreams and reality, only briefly touched upon in the previous article, now becomes a major issue. Pisarev also forgoes comment on the author's skill. He boldly announces the following: "In my article the reader will, of course, find neither praise nor criticism of the author. He will only find an analysis of those live phenomena that were the subject of the author's creative thought" ("Promakhi" [Blunders],

Sochineniia, 4:199). The elements of reality that had come to be of interest to Pisarev were poor or faulty education and its adverse effects upon the individual.[70] Pisarev declared Tolstoy's collected works, recently published by Stellovsky (1864), to be an excellent source, a veritable thesaurus of unexplored thoughts and observations on timely, important issues, overlooked by critics. Pisarev picked Tolstoy's trilogy, *Childhood, Boyhood*, and *Youth*, to zero in on its protagonists Irten'ev and Nekhliudov as societal rejects—living embodiments and victims of the educational deficiencies of their day. No longer interested in how the author created his characters, Pisarev treated them as people—average, educated Russians, typical of their generation, who failed to achieve their full human potential. Using Turgenev's fictional characters Rudin (*Rudin*, 1856) and Bazarov (*Fathers and Sons*, 1862), he described Irten'ev and Nekhliudov as falling somewhere between two generations as between two chairs, which were represented by these famous literary types, one of whom, Rudin (the man of the 1840s) was an inveterate talker, and the other, Bazarov (the man of the 1860s), a man of action: "The Irten'evs and the Nekhliudovs must be placed, both in terms of age and character, somewhere in the middle between the Rudins on the one hand and the Bazarovs on the other. The Rudins are pure talkers who do not even have an inkling that there could be any other activity except an activity of the tongue. The Bazarovs are pure men of action, who permit action of the tongue only in case it contributes to the task at hand. And the Irten'evs and the Nekhliudovs are neither here nor there—neither fish nor fowl" (*Sochineniia*, 4:201). Pisarev depicted both Irten'ev and Nekhliudov as rotten fruits of a system of enlightenment that had failed in the essential task of combining theoretical with practical knowledge. Neither young man knew how to apply his schooling to practical uses. To show the real causes of their failure, Pisarev chased them through a number of Tolstoy's stories in which they appeared, from *Childhood* to "Lucerne," castigating them mercilessly for deficiencies of mind and character. He declared both to be severe cases of acute mental atrophy, afflicted with what he termed a "rabid fear of ratiocination [*mysleboiazn'*]." Both, Pisarev said, evoked in him nothing but a keen sense of pity, mingled with disgust. Their condition, he claimed, was caused by a vicious type of upbringing perpetrated upon children of their class, an upbringing that had become one prolonged meaningless indoctrination—a

monotonous ritual that led the young straight into the path of "narcotic" dreams: "The entire scientific education they are given, beginning with their ABCs right up to the master's thesis, turns out to be for these youths just one long, tiresome ritual that must be fulfilled out of sheer respect for the establishment and its habits. . . . The education commonly administered to our children leads them nowhere, except by the most direct and reliable route into the dead end of *narcotic dreams*" (*Sochineniia*, 4:211–12). These dreams caused dismal social and personal failures, Pisarev explained, as they resulted in ignorance, prejudice, hypocrisy, self-indulgence, incompetence, emotional instability, and a thorough lack of character:

> Knowledge plays no part in their life. They are definitely not concerned with intelligence. They seek to acquire only virtue. And yet at the same time they are imbued through and through with the banalities of their society, and hamstrung on all sides by all kinds of genteel social games, worldly connections, and prejudices. [*Sochineniia*, 4:223]

> They can discourse about the ineffable beauteousness of a moral ideal and at the same time, without moving from the spot, transgress against the rudiments of common decency in the most despicable, beastly manner—this is a fact that speaks for itself most eloquently. [*Sochineniia*, 4:225]

> They grab at everything, always wanting to make an immediate and overwhelming impression, and yet they do not know the first thing about anything, and are incapable of doing anything right. [*Sochineniia*, 4:203]

All these aberrations Pisarev traced to a bad habit acquired in early schooling of playing games of "let's pretend" in order to escape the pressures and boredom of a rigid educational regimen. Eventually the boys grew up into ignorant, useless young men who were taught unneeded skills: they became impractical dreamers addicted to fanciful pursuits, likely to conduct strange experiments upon themselves or their environment; or they took up *pochvennichestvo*, the pipe dream of a rapprochement between men of the soil and the upper classes via moral self-improvement.

Pisarev made a special point of the difference between dreams that held real possibilities and daydreams that could never become or be made real. He declared indulgence in the latter to be a harmful waste of mental energy and tried to demonstrate that sensory titillation that did not lead to an increase in knowledge was detri-

mental to the mental health of the individual. The "moral self-improvement" practiced by Irten'ev and Nekhliudov he found to be mere self-indulgence. The shabbiness of such efforts was revealed each time Nekhliudov lost his temper and thrashed a serf. And this was followed by a strange display of sympathy for the beater, rather than the beaten, the logic and artlessness of which Pisarev found hard to accept: "Irten'ev begins to sympathize not with the serf boy who got thrashed but with the thrasher. Before we know it, he will walk up to his precious Dmitry, take him by the hand and say, tearfully: 'Oh, my gentle friend! Oh, my sick sky-blue dove! Perhaps you have injured your tender little hand against the filthy noggin of this ignorant and rude blockhead?'" (*Sochineniia*, 4:225). The compact whereby Irten'ev and Nekhliudov share every stray thought that occurs to them struck Pisarev as a distastful example of twisted moral antics that sprang from ignorance and an ingrained aversion to work, education, and discipline. Indulgence in such practices was like drug addiction and left the nervous system perpetually unhinged.

Pisarev's main theme, in fact, was the failure of the individual whose character was warped by a vain education to confront reality. To avoid it he tended to develop substitutes, Pisarev said, some of them marked by artistic inventiveness, but all, ultimately, only games: infantile ploys, dictated by fear of the harsh realities of life, without value or relation to the real world outside. Pisarev scornfully referred to Irten'ev and Nekhiludov as

> these flabby little people with a mind so feeble and underdeveloped that they cannot sustain a conversation on the same subject for more than three or four hours, after which time they completely lose sight of the main thread. These pitiful little creatures dare, too, to discuss the highest existential questions such as the meaning of life, morality, and general philosophy. They are like tiny little five-year-olds who blab about how they will become hussars or royal cuirassiers! You must spend some time going to school first, dear tots! Then perhaps you will become smart enough to join the hussars. Until then, though, you may play with dolls, or else dream about truffles and poulards. [*Sochineniia*, 4:232]

The young men's friendship, then, was a hothouse affair that would not stand up to a test because it was based on idleness and lack of responsibility. Pisarev suggested hard and responsible work as a cure-all. Addressing himself to a whole generation of Irten'evs and Nekhliudovs, he exhorted them to abandon their harebrained

projects and go to work: "Nekhliudov must first transform himself into a working man, try out the capacities of his mind and character in a successful application to the task with which the vast majority of mankind is charged, namely, to support his person with his own two hands" (*Sochineniia*, 4:238). With this experience he promised them a complete change in their outlook on life: "The whole meaning of things, the entire world order that includes inanimate matter and all the living things in it, changes completely in the eyes of a man when he begins to feel and becomes aware of the fact that he himself is a worker, that within himself, his head and his hands, there is an absolutely adequate guarantee of his own existence" (*Sochineniia*, 4:237). Quite clearly Pisarev no longer released the individual from responsibility for his failure, but held that a man was in charge of his own destiny and had to overcome the deficiencies in his environment and within himself. According to this new critical position, experience *could* be altered from within, indeed, everything depended on the attitude of the individual. Hence, Pisarev held, any individual who fails to confront reality is as guilty as the system that formed him.

Pisarev's last review of Tolstoy's work, "The Old Gentry" (1868), written shortly before his death (a probable suicide by drowning when he was having difficulty finding an outlet for his articles and ideas), reveals an even greater independence and a shift of position still further toward subjective interpretation. Pisarev was bent here on expounding his own message, which had little or nothing to do with the message of *War and Peace*. The article is characterized by indifference to the source and its artistic form. *War and Peace* is treated as "a textbook on the pathology of the Russian society and mores." The author is dismissed with a pat on the back: his talent has enabled him to create characters who have come alive in reality and thus may act independently, becoming valid subjects for sociological discussion and comment. In this article Pisarev was no longer concerned with environmental issues or influences such as education, upbringing, or any other matter of this sort. He was interested in the reasons mankind was falling short of his ideal of man as a "thinking realist," an Aristotelian type at once practical and soaringly intellectual. Apparently Pisarev wanted to pinpoint the probable causes of the failure on a universal scale. He picked from *War and Peace* three characters whom he cryptically labeled "the worst," and who, he implied, represented three prototypes or

extremes of the genus man. He promised to deal with the other characters when the fourth volume of *War and Peace* came out.[71]

Pisarev arranged his argument as a formal proposition conducted on three levels with a dialectical configuration of characters. One of the characters selected was very artificial. Another was very much a natural man, almost animalistic. The third appeared to be a synthesis of the other two.

Pisarev recounted in detail incidents that revealed the character of the first individual, Boris Drubetskoy, as a narrow rationalist. Boris, who thought in abstractions, was a cool, capable, ambitious individual who moved in one direction only—upward. He was a social climber, as Pisarev put it "a high-society Molchalin [a reference to a character in A. S. Griboedov's famous play *Woe from Wit* (1829)]," and a past master of the game of social diplomacy. His success, Pisarev said, was assured. His path was smooth but entirely unrelated to the real world.

As Boris's foil Pisarev chose Nikolai Rostov, in whom he stressed the features of the Tolstoyan "natural man," the "noble savage." Pisarev, however, spoke of him in unflattering terms. Rostov's life was a Dionysiac frenzy that drowned out the occasional stirring of his apparently feeble mind. Among other faults, Rostov had a penchant for gross exaggeration. Each time he became emotional he embarked upon a roller coaster tour of manic-depressive experiences. Every time he had to engage his brain he was plunged in despair because he found his mental system already blocked by some emotional monkey wrench. His feelings were always ahead of his thoughts. As a result, his mind functioned at minimum capacity. It had lost its flexibility through disuse. It operated with but a few intellectual standards, which were rigid, grossly oversimplified, and useful in only a few situations. Any confrontation with reality that required thinking sent Rostov to drink and violence as a means of drowning out the pain of unfamiliar movement inside his head. In the end he retired to a life in the country to avoid the complexities of civilization.

The third character, Vasilii Denisov, Pisarev presented in less detail but in greater psychological depth. He was, Pisarev suggested, an apparently successful synthesis of the other two: equipped with a good mind, he was sensitive, observant, and possessed of plain common sense. A little rigid in dealing with abstractions, he was quite flexible in practical things. Together, then, the

three characters formed, in Pisarev's treatment, a dialectical triad of basic prototypes of man: one rational, one emotional, and one combining the features of the other two.

To dramatize the dialectical nature of the configuration, Pisarev developed it with a series of neatly balanced rhetorical oppositions. The rational Boris Drubetskoy would, under optimum circumstances, make a fine scientist, Pisarev said. The intuitive Rostov, given favorable development, could become a good artist, perhaps even a poet. Drubetskoy dealt practically with his man-made, artificial environment; Rostov functioned impractically in his, or any other, environment. Drubetskoy felt alienated from his surroundings, however, whereas Nikolai was emotionally keenly attuned to his. Drubetskoy's social goals were exclusive; Rostov's were inclusive and conventional, and he expressed a desire to function within the group. Drubetskoy hoped to escape regimental duty and become an aide; Rostov dreamed of seeing some action soon, hoping to cover himself and his comrades-in-arms with undying glory. Drubetskoy was an astute, discriminating flatterer of people. Rostov indiscriminately adored men of distinction; his ideals proliferated or, as Pisarev put it, "grew like mushrooms." With this juxtaposition Pisarev opposed the characteristics of detachment, rational analysis, ambition, circumspection, aloofness, self-control, and efficiency to those of impulsiveness, irrationality, total involvement, religious fervor, empathy, absolute loyalty, mental simplicity, a kind of utter "animal" seriousness, savage violence and inefficiency.

In juxtaposing the two patterns, Pisarev suggested the desirability of a mutually beneficial meeting of minds between civilization and savagery, a meeting from which both sides could learn. Yet neither side, he pointed out, seemed either able or willing to become so engaged. Pisarev scornfully attributed this failure to recalcitrance. Using a subtle interplay of contrasts and similarities, he explained that the protagonists were respectively unwilling or unable to think practically, as a "thinking realist" would. The nature of the failure was twofold. Rostov failed to use his intellect, i.e., to engage in the thinking process itself. Boris Drubetskoy, on the other hand, failed to apply his talent for abstract reasoning to real problems. These failures, of course, were equally fatal. Pisarev suggested an essential difference between the world of nature, which, he held, was real, and the unreal, artificial world of court

etiquette, as in the following passage, where he described the meeting of each protagonist with the emperor, a figure of power in the "unreal" world, noting how the mental capabilities of Boris Drubetskoy increase, whereas Nikolai Rostov's decrease even further during the meeting: "The excitement that takes hold of Rostov when he sees the emperor and approaches him robs him of his ability to reason and judge his situation. . . . Boris, too, is seized by an extraordinary excitement when he approaches the person of the czar, yet the nature of his excitement is entirely different from that which is experienced by the simpleminded Rostov. Boris is excited because he is aware of being at the source of power, rewards, honors" ("Staroe barstvo" [The old gentry], *Sochineniia*, 6:436). At once describing and interpreting, Pisarev related Drubetskoy's success to the basic amorality of the excessively rational unreal world: "The frenetic greed that grips Boris on such occasions only increases his concentration, efficiency, and general attention to detail. He carries two errands to the czar to the complete satisfaction of all concerned" (*Sochineniia*, 6:436). To Pisarev there were flaws and moral implications in Drubetskoy's thinking: his mind was divorced from reality, his thinking too formal and abstract. Therefore he could discriminate, but he could not make correct value judgments. He had no feelings, only sensations. He was a cheat and a hypocrite who used his mother and exploited his friends. Yet, if ever he became embroiled in a real emotion he would become confused and would not know how to extricate himself. Drubetskoy's incompetence in dealing with real emotion was revealed, according to Pisarev, in Drubetskoy's abortive affair with Natasha, who inadvertently inspired amorous feelings for which he had no corresponding rational plans. Dazed by the experience and ruled by dreams, he procrastinated shamelessly and finally had to be eased by the old countess into a prudent flight from the scene of his embarrassment. In a real crisis with more serious implications he would be lost, unable to adjust, perhaps even broken: "A real and unexpected catastrophe may occur that will suddenly and thoroughly ruin a career that began so brilliantly and proceeded so well; such a catastrophe can hit even the most careful and circumspect of men. What it cannot be expected to do is to redirect the man's resources onto a new and more useful task, or open up new areas of application; after such a catastrophe the man is usually squashed and stunted; a brilliant, charming, successful officer

turns more often than not into a pitiful hypochondriac, a shabby beggar, or simply a lush" (*Sochineniia*, 6:429). Rostov's problems, Pisarev wrote, occurred on lower, less sophisticated levels of existence. Like a child he refused to confront what he did not like: "Instead of looking at those things that would upset him, rob him of his infantile illusions, Rostov pusillanimously squeezes his eyes shut and with dogged, cowardly persistence chases away those thoughts that take a too uncomfortable turn for him. And, not content only to close his own eyes, he tries with fanatical fervor to place others in the same condition" (*Sochineniia*, 6:446). With his mind arrested, Nikolai Rostov's future was sure to be a matter of creeping rot: "By the time he is twenty, the contents of his whole life are already wrapped up and delivered for him. From now on all he can do is, first, gradually grow in coarseness and stupidity, and, eventually, grow decrepit and disintegrate" (*Sochineniia*, 6:448). Yet, Pisarev sardonically remarked, superficial observers can always be counted upon to find him a charming, vigorous, youthful specimen of mankind.

Pisarev indicated the Denisov, too, was a failure in a real crisis. Although a more successfully integrated character, he nevertheless failed the test of adversity. When trouble struck, he too became unable to cope. Accustomed to vegetating, drifting through life instead of directing its course, he did not have the vitality to meet a crisis and fight for his rights. He was not resourceful. He allowed his career to be ruined by a mechanical, unfeeling bureaucracy. Therefore he, too, was slated for removal from life's mainstream and would be relegated to the idle life of childish games.

Thus each of Pisarev's three chosen characters failed when confronted with real problems because he would not use reason. The failure, Pisarev claimed, was due to lack of either heart, mind, or will. Not one of the prototypes fulfilled Pisarev's idea of a thinking realist, a man of courage and knowledge who understands reality and strives to change it fearlessly and resourcefully, using all his faculties. In refusing to face reality, Pisarev said, and deal with it on its terms, the individual declined to grow up and thus failed the test of living. Regardless of its intrinsic merits, this message is purely Pisarev's; it has little to do with Tolstoy's moral, social, or didactic intent in *War and Peace*.

Pisarev's intellectual bias and his tendency to ignore the author's ideas in the works he reviewed is evident in his choice of characters

for discussion in "The Old Gentry." From among the many characters in *War and Peace* he chose neither the most interesting, the most successful, nor even the most important ones, but those most appropriate for his own plans. They also happen to be characters who correspond closely to the types of people he usually discussed in his articles, particularly in reviews of Tolstoy's works. There is continuity among the characters selected from "Three Deaths," "Blunders," and "The Old Gentry," and, finally, the material is selected and arranged so as to be a restatement of Pisarev's views. Character lineage can be traced on both the social as well as the psychological levels. The common factor of artificiality is obvious between the dying lady of the "Three Deaths" and socially successful Boris Drubetskoy of "The Old Gentry." Nikolai Rostov is easily recognizable as the spiritual brother of the crude coachman of the "Three Deaths," the unthinking natural man. Vasilii Denisov's kinship with the tree, the last protagonist of the "Three Deaths," is also discernible, although on a more metaphorical level: his martial appearance notwithstanding, Denisov is the alert but will-less, heroic but concessive prototype, organically integrated with his environment. In him the struggle for survival is subdued. His career is suddenly undercut, "chopped off," as it were, in the midst of a steady growth, as if by an axe. What influence Tolstoy's three characters in "Three Deaths" may have had on Pisarev's later interpretation cannot be known. But an affinity is clearly there, and a discernible parallel in intent: each trio of characters is slated for destruction, physically and by design by the author in the story "Three Deaths"; spiritually and by conjecture by Pisarev in "The Old Gentry," where he suggests his own reasons why such an outcome is inevitable.

The development of Pisarev's ethical and psychological theories can also be traced through the articles. Correspondences are clearer between "Blunders" and "The Old Gentry," only because in the "Three Deaths" he did not make psychology and ethics an issue for detailed discussion, however. When Pisarev indicates that not one of the characters he chose from "The Old Gentry" succeeds when confronted by reality, Drubetskoy, in Pisarev's treatment, becomes an advanced and modified variant of Nekhliudov; Rostov resembles Irten'ev. The characters are merely seen as older and more corrupt. Pisarev as a judge of ethics, moreover, has become more severe. In "Blunders" he berated Irten'ev and Nekhliudov

for shirking their studies in favor of dreaming "like children" of joining the military. In "The Old Gentry" Drubetskoy and Rostov are in the military, yet Pisarev makes a point of bringing up the detail that Drubetskoy has seduced Rostov away from the university to lead a life of action and excitement in the military, i.e., he exercised a corrupting influence upon him. It is as though Pisarev wished the reader to note that features that were innocuous "in embryo" in the earlier characters have grown to be harmful in more mature stages. In this lineage of prototypes, Nekhliudov's penchant for keeping a moral ledger becomes in Drubetskoy a more pragmatic and corrupt morality, as he obeys only social standards, finding feelings that contribute to success laudable, those that distract from it objectionable. Nekhliudov's bland platonic affair with Liubov Iakovlevna becomes Drubetskoy's pointedly more sinister, practical scheme to marry the rich spinster Julie Karagin. In "Blunders" Pisarev depicted Nekhliudov as becoming confused whenever he had to deal with problems of the real world; in "The Old Gentry" he shows Drubetskoy as capable in the world of formalities and meaningless games but seriously lacking the judgment to deal with problems of the real world. In each article Pisarev takes note of the same kinds of incidents, and the same basic details attract his attention and comment, whether or not these played a significant part in Tolstoy's scheme of things. His indignant observation on Irten'ev's concern for friend Nekhliudov (see above, p. 57) after his rude contact with the serf's head is recalled in Pisarev's sardonic description of Nikolai Rostov's fanatical devotion to Emperor Alexander I and his savage desire to protect his idol from rude contact with a soldier, lying before him mortally wounded in the head. Pisarev dwells pointedly on the class prejudice displayed by the aristocratic participants in both incidents and their essentially hypocritical desire to drown out unpleasantness with genteel conversation. One need only compare the two articles to see similarities:

> The soulless Pharisee remains true to form in the smallest detail. His conscience, too, in true Pharisee fashion goes to sleep very fast during soothing, pleasant conversation. ["Blunders," *Sochineniia,* 4:232]

> When the emperor hears the groan of the dying soldier he says, "Hush, hush! Can it not be softer, more gently?!" apparently suffering, so Count Tolstoy is telling us, even more intensely than the dying soldier. Tears fill the emperor's eyes as he remarks, turning to

> [Adam] Chartoryski [his foreign minister]: "Quelle terrible chose que la guerre!" ["The Old Gentry," *Sochineniia,* 6:437]

The resemblance raises some interesting questions. It is well known that Tolstoy occasionally repeats "bits of business" from his previous works in order to illustrate a subtle point he needs to make. Possibly Tolstoy invented this pattern of genteel hypocrisy in *Youth* and used it later in *War and Peace* with more subtle development. The seemingly clumsy, ambiguous phrase of the emperor allows two interpretations because of its construction. The Russian original is even more ambiguous and allows interpretation in either extreme: it can mean, on the one hand, "I can't stand this awful sound! It gets on my nerves. Please, can't you be more quiet!" or "Gently, gently, please be gentle with this poor man!" Both readings are within the meaning of the phrase. From the glamorous and notoriously devious Alexander I the phrase seems clearly a subtle and sardonic comment on the cynicism and moral turpitude of aristocrats; however, it suggests a callous indifference to the sufferings of common men, who are regarded as things or animals, and not human beings. This "moral inferiority" of aristocrats is masked by feigned concern and fine manners while the true interests of the speakers are concealed, just as the phrasing conceals the meaning of their words. From what is known about Tolstoy it is not difficult to imagine that he may, indeed, have had something like this in mind. But Pisarev's comment makes the duplicity more obvious, thus changing the sociological aspect of the book. Tolstoy's position as an artist is altered. He becomes a civic writer. However, by dwelling on the moral implications of the characters' actions in the book, Pisarev stresses not the social issues as such, but the inner psychological states of the characters involved: he is interested in the subjective development of the individual.

In Pisarev's weltanschauung, man is what man does, although sometimes Pisarev creates the impression that he does not quite know the difference between being and knowing. The position has nothing to do with elitist tendencies, as some think, that is, with romantic individualism, exaltation of genius, or the pursuit of the extraordinary man.[72] The contrary is more the case. Pisarev's dogged, persistent efforts to find readers and to urge them to attend to mental rather than moral exercise, to thought rather than feeling, show that he was not an elitist but thought of himself as the intellec-

tual leader of the people (a kind of intellectual democrat) and, in the spirit of a Prometheus, tried to arouse the sluggish mind of *every* man.

Pisarev's audacious ideas anticipate modern existentialism inasmuch as he was concerned with the struggle of the individual against society, which he saw not from society's but from the individual's point of view. In this sense he is a prominent forerunner of the *narodniki* movement. And it is in this sense also that his position (as well as Sartre's) involves the greatest, and perhaps insurmountable, problems for the Soviets: nonconformism and philosophic idealism. It is on this point also that he is closest to Tolstoy. Pisarev displayed considerable affinity with Tolstoy's views, and their thoughts seem to have developed along similar or even parallel lines. Pisarev picked out long before anyone else some of the typical Tolstoyan subjects that later came to be the hallmark of Tolstoy's religious and philosophic views, but which Pisarev discerned as simply natural to Tolstoy's intuitive mode of thinking and already integral in Tolstoy's early work. Moreover, there is a remarkable similarity between Pisarev's experience as a literary and art critic who offended rather than persuaded with his notorious "Destruction of Aesthetics" and Tolstoy's attempt at defining the essence of art and aesthetics in his redoubtable treatise *What Is Art?* (1898), which cost him his reputation as an authority on art. These failures may well have resulted from mistaken choices in persuasive method, indicating that each man's real talent lay with the creative, rather than the critical, approach to art.

There are corollary deficiencies in Pisarev's impetuous method that may also have damaged his effectiveness as a persuader, for instance, his penchant for sophisticated reasoning. He did not hesitate to bend facts to suit his argument.[73] In addition, he affected a clever manner, annoying postures, and verbal tricks. A man of education and considerable sensitivity to language and form, he deliberately adopted a crude and coarse approach.[74] He thought of all this as an effective means of getting attention, an artful deceit of little importance like art and illusion in general, which he considered expendable, counterfeit values, redeemable through use for a worthy purpose or cause. He had a Machiavellian lack of respect for the integrity of method, and used wile and artifice to convey something of real value, in his view: his own ideas.[75] Evidence is strong that Pisarev's method was essentially a subterfuge, a Trojan

horse, devised in an attempt to win over the materialist camp as an insider. An apostle of mind over matter and a Platonian idealist at heart,[76] Pisarev posed as a materialist and employed arguments tailored to suit materialistic thinking,[77] although he himself remained unconvinced by it, not necessarily moved by any such convictions.

Materialists do not trust Pisarev. A major cause of his alienation from the materialist camp was that he denied even the feasibility of any system of normative aesthetics on grounds that beauty had only an ephemeral substance and thus no objective existence. Oddly enough, it was here that Pisarev and his materialist friends came to a parting of the ways. For all of Chernyshevsky's claims about variety in aesthetic experience and tastes in beauty, the materialists still claimed that objective beauty existed outside of man. But Pisarev said no, it existed only in the eyes of the beholder. The disagreement was basic and the reason for it fundamental: it was a matter of which was to be granted the status of primary reality, ideas or things. And this was a matter in which no materialist was prepared to accommodate Pisarev. A brilliant idealist fox, Pisarev assumed the airs of a crude materialist hog, artfully conniving to draw attention to his own ideas. To increase his influence he adopted the position and method of two prominent materialists—Chernyshevsky and Dobroliubov. But it was to no avail. Soviet critics who may have seen through some of Pisarev's cunning refer to his "radical rhetoric" as "little more than a leftist phrase to cover for rightist deeds."[78] Such a censure of Pisarev's intentions is apparently motivated by the following misunderstanding.

Pisarev was a rationalist, that is to say, his reasoning proceeded from conscious judgments. However, it was based not merely on objective but also on subjective data. The predominance of the latter, however, as a result of a disposition that existed from early youth, gave his arguments a corresponding bias. They were always oriented toward subjective considerations. This does not necessarily imply illogic, since his bias lay in premises and the predominance of the subjective factor prior to all conclusions and judgments. The superior value of the subjective idea as compared with the objective fact appeared to him self-evident from the beginning. It was not a question of assigning this value but, as I have said, of a natural disposition existing before all rational valuation. The chain of reasoning that led to the subjective factor seemed to Pisarev

somewhat more reasonable than the one that led to objective fact. The difference, though slight and practically unnoticeable to Pisarev, built up in the end to unbridgeable discrepancies that, to the Soviets, are the more irritating, the less they are aware of the minimal shift of standpoint occasioned by the psychological premise. A capital error that regularly creeps into their attempts to demonstrate the fallacies of Pisarev's thinking is that instead of recognizing the difference in his premise, they try to demonstrate fallacy in Pisarev's conclusions. Recognition of this error is a difficult matter for adherents of a thoroughly rationalistic system, which dialectical materialism undoubtedly is, since logic such as Pisarev's undermines the apparently absolute validity of its own principles and delivers it over to its antithesis—philosophical idealism, which for a Soviet theoretician amounts to a catastrophe.

It was thus Pisarev's methods, not his ideas, that were somewhat perverse and inconsistent. Ultimately, he became trapped by his own machinations. To avoid showing his ideas in a manner that would allow their idealistic background to be seen, he tried to reveal as little as possible, and thus limited his effectiveness as a critic. The deleterious effect of such practices is illustrated by Pisarev's failure in his last Tolstoy critique, "The Old Gentry," to reveal his intentions and acquaint the reader with his point of view. His method demands an unusual perspicacity of the reader, if he is to see the significance of it all; otherwise the review seems merely a mildly entertaining description of two characters,[79] Boris Drubetskoy and Nikolai Rostov, whom Pisarev evidently disliked, with the reasons for his distaste not evident. By contrast, neither Chernyshevsky nor Dobroliubov ever left their readers in the dark about their opinions. It was thus the undervaluation of his own principle that made Pisarev defensive and forced on him the psychology of the underdog. It seemed to him that the others who were apparently able, without qualms, to conform to the general style were his opponents, against whom he must defend himself. He did not see that his chief error lay in not depending on the subjective factor with the same trust and devotion with which they relied on the object. His undervaluation of his own principle made his leanings toward secrecy unavoidable, and because of this he deserves the censure of the Soviets.

Pisarev's cautious, cagey methods and his convoluted ideas about the form and content of reality, works of literature, and art

exemplify much that is strange and inexplicable in the tortuous evolution of Russian radical thought toward *narodnichestvo,* which, in the 1870s and 1880s, became a rather curious blend of positivism and ethical idealism. The *narodniki* were hopelessly confused about the nature of their ideological position, haunted by unsuccessful attempts to embrace ideas while rejecting philosophical idealism. Subsequently the whole thing was declared by the Soviets to have been a mistake, an aberration, and a dismal failure: a dead end, utopian branch of socialism. In the areas of both form and content, Pisarev's stumbling errors indicate the difficulties inherent in attempts to dilute a strictly materialistic method of dialectical interpretation of reality with a subjective view of man in society and romantic Promethean notions about the heroic individual struggling against social conformism. His aesthetic views are shared to a surprising degree, although this is not officially recognized, by the prominent old-style Marxist theoretican Plekhanov (see chap. 7), who was also convinced that without great ideas even great art would be reduced to insignificance. But Plekhanov, a more mature thinker, managed to avoid the pitfalls and the confusion inherent in attempts to add touches of dualism to materialism, which is, in the Soviet view, a strictly monistic philosophic system. Such an approach could cause a virtual split in the system and lead to various aberrations and dangerous proliferations of impure materialistic thought such as, on the one hand, dismissal of form as of no consequence to the work of art (Plekhanov, Pisarev) and, ultimately, admission of universals *ante rem;* or on the other, the trend toward dismissal of content as of no consequence to the critic and literary scholar—the deeply embarrassing thing that happened to Soviet Marxism in the event of Russian *formalism.* One way or the other, the ideological dangers inherent in all this have long been recognized by astute Soviet Marxist theoreticians, as is evident from the coolness with which the ideas of Plekhanov, Pisarev, and many other formerly prominent socialist thinkers with leftist or rightist idealist leanings are viewed in the Soviet Union today.

The antimaterialistic dialectical approach to art and reality was, on the whole, put forward better and more consistently by the so-called organic branch of Slavophiles (Grigor'ev, Strakhov, Dostoevsky), who will be discussed in the following chapter. They too were afflicted with a tiresome reluctance to come to the point and reveal their positions, because they were afraid to expose to ridicule

their precariously romantic philosophic positions based in objective idealism. But they were less confused about the nature of their stance, or about the need to keep the ideas and methods of their presentation separate, than was Pisarev. Also, as the case of the writer-editor Dostoevsky shows, they were aware of the need to keep apart the functions of critic and creative writer—something that neither Pisarev nor, for that matter, Tolstoy ever really learned to appreciate.

THE SLAVOPHILE AND ORGANIC CRITICS

The Slavophiles were more conscious of form than the radicals. In fact, they were thoroughly preoccupied with questions of form in art and literature and with various customs and rituals of Russian religious and communal life that, to them, represented the essence of Russian culture. The Slavophiles were understandably critical of the West and its practical, materialistic, rationalistic culture, which appeared to them soulless and undesirable for Russia. The more conservative Slavophiles, especially those who were inclined to think along conventional lines, venerated old Russian folklore and culture; and many Slavophiles belonged to the provincial gentry and were notably bigoted in their manners and outlook. They often carried their fondness for old Russia and its customs to ridiculous lengths, earning for themselves the unflattering sobriquet *kvas* ("bread-beer") patriots. The less conventional thinkers among the Slavophiles, who preferred to be known as "organic" critics, were more progressive. They thought of Russia in terms of her future rather than her past. They did not want to be identified with the narrowly provincial, frequently philistine point of view of the other Slavophiles who, they believed, deserved the ridicule they received from other critics. Both variants of the Slavophile movement were primarily mystically inclined Russian nationalists and romantics, and their views on art and literature corresponded as a rule. They thought of poetic inspiration as a divine experience, a form of

madness, and regarded poetic creativity as a phenomenon that could not be fully understood or become conscious and therefore should not be analyzed. They scorned the narrow rationalism and "pedestrian" analytical methods of the radicals.

The Slavophiles tended to be critical of Tolstoy's early work, which seemed to them vacuous, ambiguous, and inconclusive. They found even his war stories, for all their obvious patriotism, curiously lacking an identifiable spirit or mood of Russia, a failure they attributed to a lack of a spirit of *narodnost'*. Some Slavophile critics, such as Boris Almazov, complained about the sketchiness of Tolstoy's stories;[1] the titular head of the Slavophile movement, Konstantin S. Aksakov (1817–60), claimed that persistent analytical patterns in Tolstoy's narrative created phantom images that stuck in the reader's memory "like a bone in his throat,"[2] interfering with the enjoyment of the story. Aksakov formulated the aesthetic views of many Slavophiles when he insisted that Tolstoy curb his enthusiasm for further incisive analysis and pay more attention to artistic synthesis, which in his stories was, as yet, notably thin. This point was picked up and pursued by the originator of the organic theory, the poet-critic Apollon A. Grigor'ev (1822–64), who was close to the Slavophiles but resisted identification with them. His critiques of Tolstoy's work will be discussed later in this chapter.

The traditionalists among the Slavophiles were even more explicit about their preference for Tolstoy the artist and their rejection of him as a thinker and philosopher. The writer-critic V. G. Avseenko[3] (1842–1913) and the poet-critic N. F. Shcherbina[4] (1821–69), both fairly influential in Slavophile circles, praised the accomplished simplicity of Tolstoy's narrative and the vividness of his characterizations. They regretted, however, his irreverent attempts to philosophize and moralize about subjects in which he held no authority. The authoress-critic Evgeniia Tur (nom de plume of Elizabeth, Countess Salias de Tournemir [1815–92]) also praised the vividness and simplicity of Tolstoy's narrative, but at the same time complained bitterly of the cynicism of the author and his tendency "to rhapsodize savagery, murder, and mayhem" in *The Cossacks*.[5] The chief editor of the ultraconservative journal the *Citizen*, Prince Vladimir P. Meshchersky (1839–1914), objected to Tolstoy's "indecent" methods of psychological investigation.[6] Another highborn Slavophile, Prince P. A. Viazemsky,[7] concurred with the opinions of a string of irate generals who published angry

pamphlets and articles attacking Tolstoy's war.[8] Viazemsky challenged both the facts and theories of *War and Peace,* but found great artistic merits in the book. The poet-critic V. P. Burenin (1841–1926) and his employer, the famous writer-editor-publisher A. S. Suvorin (1834–1912), expressed similar views. Both had followed Tolstoy's career since the publication of *War and Peace,* and had published many articles about Tolstoy. Both accepted Tolstoy's art without reservations but expressed serious misgivings about Tolstoy's ideas. Extremists among the conservative faction of Russian society produced numerous pamphlets, books, and articles attacking Tolstoy's religious views.

As a rule, though, the Slavophiles were less intolerant of Tolstoy's alien ideas and aspirations than were the radicals. Several among them appraised Tolstoy in a manner that was quite close to the formal approach employed by the aesthetic critics, and discussed in great detail the specific artistic features and the merits of Tolstoy's work. Among them are the scholarly folklorist Orest F. Miller (1833–89), the very original M. S. Gromeka (1852–83), Iu. N. Govorukha-Otrok (1851–96), Vasilii V. Rozanov (1856–1919), and Konstantin Leont'ev (1831–91). Miller, who was close to the *pochvenniki,* i.e., the organic group of critics, and an ardent admirer of Dostoevsky, held a view of Tolstoy that was comparable to that of Turgenev (see chap. 4). He thought Tolstoy did not display in *War and Peace* the qualities of intellectual discipline because he lacked formal education. Miller rejected Tolstoy's views on history and philosophy as unscholarly and insubstantial. He also complained about lack of artistic unity in Tolstoy's work, in which several story lines were too loosely knit together (*na zhivuiu nitku*). Miller agreed with N. N. Strakhov's assessment of *Anna Karenina* as a brilliant work on a trivial theme but further charged that it was ideologically pointless and had an ambiguous moral message, criticisms also made by Dostoevsky (see below). Miller stressed, though, that artistically *Anna Karenina* was a work of genius.[9] The teacher-turned-critic M. S. Gromeka wrote a brilliant book-length critique of *Anna Karenina*[10] that created quite a stir when it became known that Tolstoy himself approved of Gromeka's position, remarking that Gromeka had said in so many words "what I had tried to express in pictures." The book underwent several editions and earned its author general recognition as a major critical talent for his remarkably astute analysis of the underlying psychological motives of the

author and characters of *Anna Karenina*. For one reason or another, Gromeka's book is completely ignored today. Gromeka supplied sensitive analyses of Stiva Oblonsky, Karenin, and Vronsky, all of whom he described as basically quite ordinary, decent, average people, very successfully drawn. Gromeka claimed that Dolly Oblonsky was the real heroine of the book—a female Karataev, i.e., a representative of Tolstoy's philsophy of life. He defined Levin's philosophy of life as a ceaseless quest for life's truth, and Levin himself as healthy because he was a perennially "unfinished" person. But, he said, as a characterization Anna herself was a failure. She was meant to be a realistic portrayal of a woman of the world; instead, she became a distorted personality, for Tolstoy had inadvertently, by modeling her on himself, endowed her with traits that could not exist in real life: she was a female rationalist, an unnatural combination of male and female characteristics. Gromeka was thus also fairly close to the analysis of these characters by Strakhov (see below). Of interest is Gromeka's analysis of the main conflict in the book, which, he said, was missed by the other critics: *Anna Karenina* was deeply imbued with rationalism, but Tolstoy was advocating an antirationalistic point of view. This created an irrational and fascinating tension between the material and the author's own attitude, and left dissatisfied those critics who were unable to see the deeper organic unity of the book. Gromeka echoed Strakhov's argument even in claiming that Tolstoy's short story "What People Live By" provided the answers to the questions raised and left unanswered by the novel: the solution to life's problems was to turn away from rationalism. Many of Gromeka's judgments (as well as those of Iu. N. Govorukha-Otrok) were shared by Strakhov, whereas others were similar to those of Merezhkovsky (see chap. 6). Merezhkovsky also agreed with the paradoxical Rozanov, who wrote extensive rambling critical studies of Gogol and Dostoevsky but only brief, casual and perfunctory critiques of Tolstoy. Because of his importance to Russian literature[11] his critiques of Tolstoy deserve to be mentioned. Rozanov saw *War and Peace* as a breakthrough in the quest for indigenous Russian forms of literature begun by Pushkin, the importance of whose pioneering work of exploration was not perceived or noted by his contemporaries or, for that matter, anyone but the organic critics, who were alone in their understanding of the history and destinies of the Russian people.[12] Rozanov referred to the theme of

War and Peace as a quest for inner harmony. He accused Tolstoy of contradicting himself in *The Kreutzer-Sonata.*[13] The rest of Rozanov's whimsical opinions, particularly those he shared with Merezhkovsky, seem paradoxical, implausible, and insubstantial. He cites, for example, the absence of religious mysticism in Tolstoy's works as proof of Tolstoy's innate irreligiosity; referring to D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky's assessment of Tolstoy's talent as Shakespearean in scope and nature, Rozanov quipped that in matters of religious Tolstoy was Shakespeare who had moved into the house of Gogol's philistine female character Korobochka (Mrs. Littlebox).[14] On the whole, Rozanov's comments on Tolstoy deserve only brief consideration.

Konstantin Leont'ev's remarkable study *Analysis, Style, and Atmosphere,*[15] although also highly subjective, deserves more respect. It may easily have served as the source of inspiration for some of Merezhkovsky's more remarkable ideas.[16] Leont'ev compared *War and Peace, Anna Karenina,* and several stories by Tolstoy and reached some notable conclusions. He discovered objectionable anachronisms in the essence or atmosphere (*veianie*)[17] of *War and Peace,* which, he claimed, Tolstoy had simply transferred back in time from his own period in history. The pace of life in *War and Peace,* he said, was too fast for the more leisurely generation described there. The famous Tolstoyan character Platon Karataev, who is generally assumed to represent the essence of the Russian people in Tolstoy's view, was, in Leont'ev's view, simply a nostalgic projection of stale Slavophile sentiment of the 1860s. The moral and mental disposition and keen self-awareness of Pierre Bezukhov and Andrei Bolkonsky belonged to the restless, nervous generation of that decade. Echoing Turgenev's comments in private letters, Leont'ev suggested that Tolstoy did not know enough to move far enough back in time to avoid such discrepancies. Leont'ev thus assessed Tolstoy's evolution as a creative artist in terms of a struggle for increased self-discipline. He looked at Tolstoy's style and methods of analysis, and concluded that both aspects of Tolstoy's art were slowly evolving toward simplicity and restraint. Complexities of style and awkward sound effects, still quite evident in *War and Peace,* had given way in *Anna Karenina* to a more restrained narrative that depended on intrinsic qualities of meaning, rather than sound and syntax. The pithy, folksy turns of phrase that created such a wooden, garish effect in Tolstoy's early stories about

the people ("Polikushka"), yielded to the perfectly simple, transparent language of his later stories for the people ("What People Live By"). Still, however, Tolstoy returned to overrefined psychological analysis whenever he neared the subject of death, as though he could rarely resist the temptation to peek beyond the grave. Leont'ev lavishly praised the restraint with which the death of Prince Andrei was depicted in *War and Peace,* but objected to the descriptions of many other deaths in Tolstoy's works, including those of Ivan Ilych and Anna Karenina. He found these descriptions overloaded with pure speculation. Leont'ev also objected to the excessive ornamentation of Anna's dreams; the black bag in the dreams of Anna Karenina and Ivan Ilych seemed ridiculous and indecent: a persistent, meaningless, and unaesthetic nightmare, a residual "physiologicl excess" of early naturalism (*natural'naia shkola*) in Russian literature.

So, the Slavophiles' complaints focused mainly on what they called inartistic, rational, analytical elements in Tolstoy's work, which predominanted over artistic synthesis. They objected to this rationalism, his attempts to explain what had not been explained in life and had traditionally remained mysterious—the hidden workings of nature, of history, and of destiny. The Slavophiles felt that Tolstoy was out of line in meddling with things that were not meant for man to know or understand. They even felt that in using his special methods of analysis Tolstoy interfered with nature. His probing and philosophizing spoiled what would otherwise be perfect works of literary art. But they were willing to forgive Tolstoy for the excesses of his analysis and welcomed the rest of his work because they regarded it as worthy representations of Russia: they saw that in the long run he had imbued enough of it with the spirit of Russian *narodnost'* and thought of him as an important national writer. They were enough aware of the intrinsic merits of his works to excuse extrinsic defects of his curiously self-analytic art.

THE ORGANIC CRITICS

The organic critics were interested in psychology. But even though they referred to themselves as psychological realists, they were philosophic idealists. They argued for the autonomy of the literary experience, but actually used literature to promote their belief that ideas had primary reality and a substance that is independent of matter. They studied Tolstoy's work with the aim of

understanding its moral core. Their own theoretical assumptions, however, were never clearly formulated, and their content was obscure and esoteric to begin with; many problems sprang from following their organic theory and method. They tried to probe the meaning of the universe and tried to discover its secrets, but avoided formulas as being oversimplifications of reality and scorned rational analysis. They preferred synthesis, the inspired approach. The paradox is characteristic of their writings. They felt that synthesis does more justice to the unknowable than clarity can do, for uniformity of meaning robs the mystery of its darkness and sets it up as something that is known. The organicists felt that is a usurpation, and that it leads the human intellect into hubris by pretending that it, the intellect, has got hold of the transcendent mystery by a cognitive act and has grasped it. The paradox therefore reflects a higher level of intellect and, by not forcibly representing the unknowable as known, gives a more faithful picture of the real state of affairs. It was this approach that made their theory most difficult to follow and understand even in Russia,[18] where many of its premises were known and even popular with some other critics.[19] A satisfactory definition of the organic theory has not yet emerged. The principle of definition implies a formulatable essence, and it is impossible to reduce the organic principle to a reliable formula. The greatly varying organic statements have so far failed to coalesce so that they demonstrate a clear design. The best one can do is offer a hypothesis. Since the theory is relevant to almost everything the organic critics said about Tolstoy, and familiarity with it cannot be assumed,[20] I am prefacing my analysis of their work on Tolstoy by a new hypothesis about the nature of the organic theory of life, literature, and aesthetics, the theory in which works of literature parallel living organisms and must serve a moral purpose.

The organicists saw life not as a product of organized matter but as an external force that enters the material world for some arcane purpose. Their ideas about it were thus radically different from the usual understanding of the nature of life. Their theory, which is an irrational, open-ended dialectic system, seems to be based on two assumptions whence all of its conclusions are derived. (1) Objectively, it explains the universe in terms of an everlasting conflict between incompatible opposites such as form (matter) and formlessness (energy). The conflict is sometimes temporarily resolved in an

unstable conjunction, which enables an incommensurate, unknowable, "wholly other" third element—life—to manifest itself. (2) Subjectively, the theory seems to assume that form, a basic intellectual concept, artifically limits perception by the definitions it imposes. Life, which is formless and not definable, therefore seems insubstantial, because the normal intellect, which operates by placing limits on concepts, cannot grasp the indefinite and so perceive the essence of life. Perception can proceed only from a compromise between lifeless form and formless life, whereby life is framed by a body and inhabits what amounts to a limiting form. The intellect prefers form to substance, formula to meaning, the container to the contained, the part of the whole. Life, however, vaguely discloses itself within intuitive perception such as inspiration, whereas its essence cannot be perceived by the intellect at all. And so, reason, which by its very nature is opposed to intuition, tends to ignore life as the least adequately defined part and prefers to deal with its container—the animal form. Reason, being analytical, is thus always at odds with life. The result is a strange paradox: human reason, which is the sine qua non of consciousness, is "anti-life" because it seeks to define, and life will not supply this understanding. The Russian organicists, who equated morality with life and immorality with death (see Dostoevsky's symbolic story "Bobok" [1877]), asserted that this conflict between life and reason has a double meaning. On the one hand, it promises an increase in consciousness, a superior, even artistic, awareness; on the other, it endangers life, the moral point of view. Consciousness of a *limited* existence in the physical world increases as it is fed by deadly logic, and conscience, which is rooted in imagination and a sense of a *limitless* metaphysical existence, becomes enfeebled. The theory thus suggests a rising conflict between conscience (moral awareness) and consciousness (intellectual awareness) from a change in thinking patterns.

GRIGOR'EV

The organic theory was developed and promulgated by the poet and critic Apollon A. Grigor'ev (1822–64), whose views anticipate those of Henri Bergson.[21] Grigor'ev imagined life to be a great current (*veianie*), a mysterious creative-destructive energy that gushes forth through matter and makes it come alive by impregnating it. He saw organic growth as a synthesis of matter and energy,

in which rigid known material and fluid unknown energy elements of knowable empirical reality (elements he alternately describes as "static" and "dynamic," "body" and "soul") come together to form a permeable substance, the living tissue. This substance, figuratively, provides an opening into the fourth dimension—the realm outside empirical experience—an opening through which the unknowable third substance, the transcendent wind (*veianie*) of life, inspiration, may pass. Grigor'ev held that life is commonly corrupted or stopped by faults in this opening, impurities in the filter that result from undue stress or imbalance between its two elements. The stops are revealed to us in rigid matter, violent manifestations of chaotic energy, or living beings in whom life is impeded or warped through confinement to a faulty frame. People thus suffer physical or mental disease; they disintegrate into madness or death. Grigor'ev further identified static form with a creative feminine material, and dynamic formlessness with a destructive masculine spiritual principle, asserting that the predominance of one or the other element in nature accounts not only for the presence of the sexes, but also for two basic types of animal and man: the domesticated, indolent, conservative and defensive victim, and the aggressive, wild, dynamic predator. The encounter of the two principles would be akin to sex, inasmuch as it would express the creative-destructive impulse and the potential for renewed life, and the victim's form would be violated in the process. Assimilation of old forms and the formation of new ones, through conflict, assault, destruction, absorption, and remaking, were seen by Grigor'ev as an organic and essential part of life.

Grigor'ev found literature to be a reflection of this process, and subject to the same mysterious laws. Creative writing seemed a violent, often destructive process of conflict and experimentation in which intellectual opposites—facts and ideas, known and unknown ingredients—are fused in a work of art. His argument proceeded from the commmonplace of speculative (idealist) philosophy, which recognizes three kinds of data: (1) known, (2) unknown but knowable, i.e. accessible to rational understanding, and (3) unknowable, i.e., remaining forever beyond the limits of human understanding. Grigor'ev held that old facts and ideas were the known, and new facts and ideas the unknown but knowable, materials of literature (i.e., they could become new knowledge). Inspiration, however, belonged to the realm of the unknowable. It was life

itself; it could be experienced but never rationally understood. Inspiration (life) impregnated the poet's mind, for example, only if it contained a sufficiently seasoned, harmonious blend of the poet's own ideas and experiences. During the process, the poet teeters on the verge of insanity (mental death) from the strain involved in putting together facts and ideas. The theory suggests a vital moral role for literature, as a balanced composition resulting from such creative effort would reflect the success of the synthesis; although it would be limited by its form and thus never perfect, such a work of art nevertheless has the capacity to inspire others and cause healthy growth in their minds. On the other hand, works with too few original ideas and many already familiar (commonplace) ingredients exercise a stifling effect.

The organic critics are worthy of note for their investigation of "intellectual limitation" (Roland Barthes calls it "bourgeois consciousness" in *Writing Degree Zero*), moral and mental philistinism, and its attendant phenomenon, bourgeois art. Grigor'ev explained this phenomenon as a result of eccentricity—overloading with known ingredients—facts—to the detriment of fresh, original ideas, or, conversely, overloading the work with half-formed conventional ideas. Grigor'ev claimed that imbalance between the two empirically knowable ingredients—facts and ideas—caused the departure of the unknowable ingredient—inspiration—stifling life in the composition, thus causing its decomposition. According to the theory, an excess of one element in the work would trigger and release, by a kind of induction, excesses of the other in the mind of the reader. Conventional literature on familiar or banal subjects spurred people to antisocial behavior. At the other extreme, abstract art represented a gloomy, lifeless dynamism; intellectual energy unburdened by knowledge of concrete reality manifested patterns of restless, uninspired thought, a sterile refinement of conventional ideas, and weird abstractions. It had a depressing effect and produced a yearning for static, banal experience. Both forms of art were intellectually sterile, and their sensationalism or sentimentalism appealed to the philistine.

Grigor'ev conceived of philistinism, the bourgeois spirit (*meshchanstvo*), as significant because it was ubiquitous and was an intellectual, rather than cultural, phenomenon. It derived from the tendency of reason to limit itself, deal with known quantities, and so become conventional, prejudiced, and myopic. It could appear

on all levels of culture. In essence it meant deliberate limitation of experience: acceptance of the part for the whole, finding it sufficient for the purposes of understanding, and rejecting the rest. In this intellectual parochialism one was satisfied with a rational, materialistic explanation of the mysteries of the universe—or with the opposite, pure mysticism. Either tendency, if unchecked, led to a rejection of everything unknown and acceptance of only apparently new variations on customary experiences and ideas. Since this state of mind favored rejection, Grigor'ev called it negativism (*otritsanie*). A philistine artist was often an accomplished craftsman who would paint or write on trivial matters in a beautiful, highly refined style. His work would be characterized by a kind of glossy sleekness and plumpness, a smoothness of form. His life, intellectual and otherwise, however, was restless, the condition of a person who has nightmares of being stifled and seeks to awaken to a higher state of consciousness. He suffered from chronic mental imbalance because of his lack of new ideas. Because he could not inspire, he attempted to shock. The stimulation or surprise he could effect was often mistaken for, but was not, growth, Grigor'ev said; it was only a negative, i.e., an illusory effect. Philistine literature always was and would be imbalanced, whether in a static or a dynamic sense; therefore it could never stimulate growth. Nor could it restore balance to the life of the individual. Only a harmonious blend between static facts and dynamic ideas produced the conditions necessary for inspiration, which was the only means of creating a living work that could inspire others.

Grigor'ev's brilliant, "savage" mind (in Claude Lévi-Strauss's sense of the word) had difficulty in showing logically the development of his abstractions, and he preferred to demonstrate them with concrete examples. He asserted that Pushkin was the ideal Russian poet because of his unsurpassed ability to sustain the precarious but vital balance between known and unknown ingredients in art. Similarly, he repeated ad nauseam that the playwright A. N. Ostrovsky (1823–86), although only a mediocre talent, nevertheless promoted the same healthy balance in his plays. Their works, Grigor'ev found, have the great benefit of stimulating moral growth in Russia's people and writers. Grigor'ev named the highly renowned Russian writer Ivan A. Goncharov (1812–91) as an example of a bourgeois writer—an intellectual philistine of powerful talent who was too fond of the known (static) patterns of experi-

ence. He compared him with the famous poet Lermontov, who, he said, was a snob with a puerile fascination for conventional violence and stale romantic conventions borrowed from Europe. Both Goncharov and Lermontov were rationalists—highly self-conscious artists who lacked original ideas and dealt in *idées reçues*, which made them intellectual retainers and moral philistines no matter how excellent their verbal skills. Thus, Grigor'ev explained, their art was lopsided. It was slick and precious, heavy with conventional elements and, consequently, somewhat banal. Each of them possessed an enormous talent but, lacking ideas, they devoted their talents almost exclusively to the refinement of form.

But the most interesting phenomenon of the opposite, dynamic kind that Grigor'ev found in Russian literature was the fascinating case of Gogol—the man of weird, half-formed ideas—the strange philistine genius of the dynamic extreme. Gogol was a mystic trickster, an antirationalist who hated book learning. He did not know Russia,[22] so he populated her with his own ideas, practically reinvented her in his own image, and with startling results. According to Grigor'ev, Gogol, whose thinking (as opposed to his artistic intuition) tended to be negative, was responsible for spawning a new trend of negativism in Russian literature, a destructive and sterile trend related to Russian nihilism. In Gogol, Lermontov, and Goncharov, furthermore, death or developing insanity followed an intermittent sterility and lack of ideas, caused by lack of inspiration. This sad condition was not alleviated by their great talents, which they never lost; but talent could not substitute for inspiration, Grigor'ev said, despite the common belief.

Grigor'ev wrote his two articles on Tolstoy, both titled "Contemporary phenomena in our literature overlooked by our critics,"[23] primarily as polemic thrusts at his opponents, the radical critics. He wanted to suggest that they were failing to see life: failing in their responsibility as critics to discover, trace, and stimulate the significant phenomena of contemporary life reflected in literature. His second purpose was to assess Tolstoy as a writer, discuss what good Tolstoy's work could do in stimulating life in Russia, and compare his work with that of other writers. Grigor'ev was the first to discover and discuss Tolstoy's "creative tensions," which he described as a psychological conflict between Tolstoy's unconscious artistic and conscious analytical qualities: a conflict, as he saw it, between an unholy tendency to "cleave, discern, and rift his way

into the secret of things," and a reciprocating unconscious urge to make whole, create, and synthesize. Tolstoy's potential as a future intellectual leader of the nation was beyond question, Grigor'ev said. Tolstoy had great talent and thought as a national writer should; he shared with other writers the prevailing mood of morbid negativism that, to Grigor'ev, was a valid spirit of the times, meant to rid Russian life and culture of an excess of alien customs. Grigor'ev, moreover, offered an imaginative hypothesis explaining the development of Tolstoy's talent. Tolstoy, interested in the major topics of the age, did not yield to self-deception or self-promotion; he was neither morbidly self-conscious, enamored of foreign ideals, nor ready to embrace trivial conventional ideals (*ideal'chiki*). Yet, unlike Pushkin, who was born a perfectly balanced person, Tolstoy was handicaped by an overly analytical turn of mind. This caused his initially one-sided development and temporarily immobilized him as a creative writer by robbing him of inspiration. Analysis, Grigor'ev claimed, caused a host of concomitant problems. Tolstoy almost became a nihilist by way of turning into a youthful skeptic because he felt he could not trust the ideal element in life and had to rely on facts. He saw the concrete, static element in life as the only reliable reality and thus became a one-sided materialist. The logical consequence of this was that he had to make the meek type his only real hero. Furthermore, he was preoccupied with death because he had pushed his analysis past the outer limits of known life into abstractions. His current creative impasse was the result of lack of inspiration, an inevitable disorientation in the wake of excessive preoccupation with analyzing ephemeral phenomena. Critics should have investigated the nature of Tolstoy's analysis, Grigor'ev said, and since they had not, he offered to explain his rather esoteric conclusions.

To show some of the underlying causes of Tolstoy's malaise, Grigor'ev employed biographical analysis. He claimed that Tolstoy's personal circumstances were forcing him to assume an unduly analytical, defensive posture. The combination of an innately analytical mind, an aristocratic background, and a foreign education had seriously alienated Tolstoy from his roots—the Russian people—and made him restless and dissatisfied with himself. He was determined to reestablish his roots in Russian life to ameliorate his restlessness. Suspicious from childhood about the true value of his sterile, highly artificial circumstance, he found out

early that he could explore his situation by analytical probing. His choice of analysis as a means of attacking his problem required no explanation. However, his analysis was combined with an inherent trait: a ruthless perfectionist's desire for unqualified truth, which finite reason could never hope to obtain. The combination of the two traits constituted a move in the wrong direction. Analysis, Grigor'ev said, was the correct tool for removing sham; but constructive endeavor required synthesis—something Tolstoy was reluctant to employ. Thus Tolstoy was straying from an originally sound creative direction, as one-sided analysis caused a failure to know life through skepticism and rejection of the ideal element in life. As a result, Tolstoy found himself leaning toward abstract art.

Grigor'ev speculated on the reasons analysis had such an effect. Tolstoy, he said, mistrusted anything that could not be analyzed. He came to mistrust the motives behind every lofty sentiment, because in his milieu it was frequently suggested by baser motives. He dug for such motives in order to discover the real forces behind people's actions. Although he sometimes encountered phenomena that seemed genuine and resisted differentiation (such as real goodness of the heart), he continued his suspicious treatment of lofty motives—all that was unusual and complex, yet resisted dismemberment by analysis. He was encapsuled in a small aristocratic world of artificial values, and here he saw himself as an arbiter of absolute morality and sometimes applied his individual judgment too zealously. He painted, like a beacon in the maze of confusing experiences, the slightly contrived, but lovingly drawn, conventional ideal—an icon of his dead mother, whom he never knew—and, thus oriented, proceeded ruthlessly to analyze his own soul. Because he possessed an unusually sophisticated technique of analysis, Tolstoy was soon reaching into a psychological void where he found himself chasing shadows and creating abstractions.

Grigor'ev found in Tolstoy's analysis features of abstract art—a tendency toward narrow intellectual concentration and an unswerving effort that literally did transcend the real world. His analysis became a rampaging monster of a process of progressive division, a one-way deductive method that could not stop and went right past infinitesimal into imaginary detail. Tolstoy's analysis, he found, was more specific and accurate, less biased and arbitrary than the analysis of others. But it was also more abstract and grimly intense, and it indicated a disturbing degree of contempt for the

integrity of the analyzed object. Tolstoy showed no respect for the deepest integral recesses of the human soul, places that were so vulnerable that they were better left untouched by analysis. The stress of conventional morality made his soul writhe and contort, practically forcing it into a face-saving twist. The twisting occasioned a renewed round of suspicion, pressure, persecution, and punishment, his ego always emerging the victor. It was a vicious circle that made him finally abandon autobiographical analysis in the middle of *Youth* (the novel was never finished). He made there some faint moves to inflate himself. He exaggerated the size of his vices to make them appear more sinister and formidable than they really were. He extended his analysis to the point of boring some readers. Unintentionally, the distension served a creative purpose: it underscored the contrast between the real and the artificial imaginary world he was creating for himself and showed that his unreal world lacked substance. He then extended his search for clues to truth into a wider area and broke out of his self-contained little universe; but he could no longer change his approach, and he continued his analytical practices as before. By then the infinite reality of the universe had shrunk for him to a finite concept—the mere equivalent of truth and simplicity. The attitude manifested itself in a compensatory tendency to mistake size for greatness and was expressed with grandiloquent language. Occasionally, Tolstoy still met with some unusual phenomenon that would resist his frantic efforts to analyze it; and the fact of its being nondifferentiable, yet not simple, and thus possessed of genuinely live quality, would stun Tolstoy for a spell into unconscious creativity. But when he regained control, he went on as before to seek out and destroy falsity, artifice, and other strictly negative values, i.e., he indulged in negativism.

Grigor'ev tried to show how this trend toward egocentricity had brought Tolstoy close to intellectual philistinism. Initially intended as a mere device to reach the truth, analysis, once it got past objective reality (the world of objects), became in Tolstoy's hands an instrument of ego-expansion as he began to use it to explore his own inner world. The process was accompanied by distortion, manifestations of which could be noticed in his stories, such as a shrinking outside world. Analysis, indeed, showed signs of evolving its own rudimentary ego by becoming an end in itself. The development, Grigor'ev granted, was very complex. A number of threads

ran through Tolstoy's analytical stories that suggested to Grigor'ev a telescopic inversion in Tolstoy's view of the real outer and ideal inner worlds. As truth was becoming identified in Tolstoy's mind with simplicity (which is a further limitation of the concept), analysis was showing signs of unlimited expansion into complexity: (1) endless progressive differentiation reaching into imaginative detail, (2) gradual and all-pervasive intensification, and (3) exaggeration and distortion. This morbid tendency toward a mad analytical hyperactivity in Tolstoy's brain was apparently being held in check, though with increasing difficulty, by an innate sense of proportion that Tolstoy evidently still had and that Grigor'ev thought was a sign of genuine artistic talent, but that nevertheless was threatened by an incipient move toward intellectual philistinism that needed to be checked.

Because Tolstoy's analysis, Grigor'ev said, was furnished with a huge talent, it sometimes achieved great penetration and amazing verisimilitude. But eventually it would lead Tolstoy into the philistine realm of abstract art and toward vicious and endless refinement of sterile ideas. Eventually it would escape his control, produce mere conjecture, and destroy virtually all lofty stirrings within Tolstoy's soul, as, Grigor'ev said, had indeed occurred in several stories written in the late 1850s—stories in which analysis had found nothing to do besides wholesale destruction of ideals, after which it diffused into generalities and petered out in a kind of *Ausklang* in a minor key—a sad and lofty pagan lament about lost ideals that Tolstoy had made for himself and then deprived of meaning by analyzing them. Tolstoy's search for new ideals while he refused to admit the reality of the dynamic element as a real factor in life proved sterile and disappointing, and the search was brought to a grinding halt amidst confusion and despair. His most recent stories were all characterized by a depressing mood of hopelessness, a result of negativism. Tolstoy felt obliged to revere only that which he knew, but commonplace ideals were limited, and most such ideals were not very impressive. On other ideals, Grigor'ev charged, Tolstoy wasted his analysis. Meek characters and antiheroes could not replace the dynamic hero, yet Tolstoy failed to create dynamic characters and to affirm their heroic natures; his further explorations discovered only a void. Tolstoy made one more desperate attempt at finding a limited (i.e., philistine) solution to all sorts of existential problems by trying to define

the meaning of life in terms of conventional domesticity in *Family Happiness*, where he vainly tried to simplify the problem. The attempt left him dissatisfied artistically, and he lapsed into a mood of somber resignation and apathy in 1860. Depressed and bewildered by his enormous creative problems, he simply did not know where to turn. The mood of apathy, Grigor'ev said, was quite understandable, but it was not final. A genuine creative talent like Tolstoy's could not remain repressed for long.

Having outlined what he believed to be Tolstoy's special problems of creativity, Grigor'ev proceeded to show that there was not too much danger that Tolstoy's talent would be stifled by intellectual philistinism. Grigor'ev demonstrated the innate vitality of Tolstoy's talent by showing that it was developing not only toward abstraction but also in the direction of synthesis, organic integration, and a balanced and imaginative treatment of both the static and the dynamic elements in life. The movement was evident in his works so far, which showed a normal pattern of growth from purely experimental analytical studies, to crude attempts at lifelike development of, for the most part, preconceived notions, to integrated artistic creations that successfully embodied the results of previous creative experiments built upon observation and experience:

> Tolstoy's activity, as it has been shaping up so far, can actually be divided into three categories: (1) purely analytical works such as *Childhood* and *Boyhood* and *Youth*; (2) artistic sketches that attest to an extraordinary power and originality of talent but still have only the character of studies, a character that is purely formal, superficial, such as "The Snowstorm," and "The Two Hussars"; and (3) results of analysis, more or less successful and accomplished, where the artist already tries to create real, live types, to embody in images that which he had obtained previously by means of analysis. These stories are either mere attempts, amazing though they may be, but still rather bare, dogmatic pieces such as "The Notes of a Billiard Marker," "The Raid," "Albert," "Lucerne," "Three Deaths," or else they are already perfectly organic, live creations, such as the war stories and "Family Happiness." It goes without saying that such categorization is true with regard only to the most general character of these works. The organic element, the element of artistic creativity, is present, and present to an astounding degree, in works that have a completely analytical character; conversely, elements of analysis, and the boldest analysis, enter also into the artistic sketches. This is so because Tolstoy's activity as a whole is an alive, organic creativity. And I am making this arbitrary division only as a

guideline, to aid in explanations of the moral and artistic processes involved.[24]

To suggest that Tolstoy's struggles in the evolution of his basic narrator compared with those of other great writers such as Pushkin, Grigor'ev outlined the formidable problems involved in creating a character who would be thoroughly alive and not just an abstraction. The task, Grigor'ev said, was arduous and the process complex. A character had to be put together from typical human ingredients but in a combination that would be unique. The concept—the ideal image itself, which so far loomed only in the back of the artist's imagination—was elusive. It had to be captured and dressed in flesh and blood. Such bringing together of the real and ideal ingredients in a live individual character was a process fraught with irrational tensions. The artist had to proceed slowly, cautiously testing his ground. He had to feel his way toward the actual character, groping in the dark for suitable artistic detail while avoiding the pitfalls of stereotyping; he had to struggle with the natural resistance of the component parts to integration. The search for the right detail sometimes produced a mutant: an image that wobbled, doubled, or split. The pressure of the creative effort threatened to throw the author and the product off balance and impede the coming together of its body and soul. Sometimes an image would keep dogging the writer, and he would respond by alternating between the variants:

In the case of any artist, if he is truly an artist, analysis can never be bare: it is invariably clothed in poetic images; sometimes it even fastens onto a single image which then doggedly pursues the artist for the duration of his entire creative life and changes in accordance with its different phases. Sometimes this image, this moral ideal of the artist himself, doubles, as, say, with Pushkin, into Onegin and Lensky, with Lermontov into Arbenin and Zvezdich, and into Pechorin and Grushnitsky. The doubling of the image is of course, always a sign of forward movement in the artist himself who has assumed a critical attitude toward the image that pursues him: and as for results, this splitting is incomparably more productive than, say, the gloomy, intense one-sidedness that could really become legitimatized perhaps only once, in the person of Lord Byron. . . .

In any case, whether we look for it in the works of most objective or the works of most subjective artists, we can always eventually find the main image that pursues them. And the broader the basic nature of the artist, the broader will be also his ideal, his favorite image, and

> the more true to the national type; but that the moral life of the artist is always embodied in a certain mutating and often doubling image—this is not subject to any doubt whatever.
>
> Tolstoy, too, has this image that keeps dogging him, to which his analysis is fastened, that person in whose name he tells *Childhood, Boyhood*, and *Youth*, and who in *A Family Happiness* merely changes sex and becomes a woman. The image splits, but it splits only superficially—appearing in "The Notes of a Billiard Marker" and "Lucerne" as Prince Nekhliudov. . . .
>
> In all these stages the struggle is worth a most detailed study. . . . But what is everywhere especially astonishing is the constant inconsistency of the soul that is alive and unique—her stubborn and unruly recalcitrance toward the type to which she is becoming attached, while she displays an intellectually quite consistent attitude—a consistent understanding of the need to absorb the type on the intellectual level. Clearly, then, the type must contain something that the soul finds irresistibly attractive, yet that at the same time has something that she feels she must constantly betray and that therefore must be definitely against her grain. [Pp. 514, 537]

Here, as elsewhere, Grigor'ev said, Tolstoy's most durable characteristic was his tendency to transgress and overstep the bounds. For instance, his basic narrator, although well within the broad category of the meek type, was far more complex. He was a full-fledged individual, an organic personality, somewhat lacerated in psyche, but in any case not a foil, a mere variant, as the characters of other writers tended to be. This meant that Tolstoy had moved a step ahead of them:

> In splitting, this image . . . represents only the extreme limits of the analysis that distinguishes the hero of *Childhood, Boyhood*, and *Youth* from other contemporary heroes. . . . He and Nekhliudov are not at all like Onegin and Lensky, who are, actually, aspects of Pushkin the lyric poet and Pushkin the epic narrator Belkin; nor are they the same as Arbenin and Zvezdich, who fuse into Pechorin, and not at all the same as Pechorin and Grushnitsky, that is, the ideal and its parody. Nekhliudov is the outer limit of an encompassing psychic process, and more than that—he is the living consequence of that very special circumstance of a so-called aristocratic microcosm to which he is confined like to a shell, and from which the hero of *Childhood, Boyhood*, and *Youth* is evidently trying to struggle free. . . . In any event, the psychic process does not result in a split but merely reaches its outer limits. [P. 514]

When Tolstoy created characters of the meek type, Grigor'ev said, he again went to extremes of individualization, even though

his work on such characters remained well within the overall pattern of behavior for the meek type as he appears in the works of other major national writers. This type, first introduced by Pushkin in his character Belkin, had since become something of a fixture in Russian letters. Lermontov, Turgenev, Pisemsky, Goncharov, and Tolstoy all took their turns at him. Literature, Grigor'ev wanted to remind his readers, always developed vivid symbols for the most significant issues that continued, for whatever reason, to concern the nation. The meek character as a literary type thus came into being as a bewildered reaction to the massive cultural upheavals in the preceding epoch, essentially as an artistic means of expressing the frustration of the average Russian in the face of the abuses perpetrated on his land and customs by the elegant foreign aggressor who came to plant his own culture. This situation, becoming intolerable to the indigenous population, needed to be expressed and symbolized in literature to release frustrations. It was also necessary, however, to produce a model character who could deal with the situation. In this sense, Grigor'ev said, the meek type was never meant to become a stock character in Russian literature who represented a permanent variant of the Russian type. He was not meant to develop into the organic personality that Tolstoy created in his works. His significance was merely as a foil to the native Russian predator that Russian writers were developing, who could match the foreign devil with his tricks. But here again Tolstoy went further than the others. By making his meek character come fully alive, he made him assume the functions of both types. And he discarded the predator altogether, thus inadvertently foiling, perhaps, his own literary task.

Comparing other characteristics of Tolstoy with salient features of the Russian national character in order to establish Tolstoy's qualifications as a national writer, Grigor'ev claimed that, to some degree, the tendency to overdo things was organic to the Russian national character. The Russians always overshot the bounds in whatever they undertook. This was evident, for instance, in the peculiar fierceness of negativism, a current trend in Russian literature represented by the radical critics, and typical of the current literary trend of naturalism, to which he referred as bare (stark) realism. Negativism, he said, was just another aspect of the same visceral reaction of the natives to outlandish conditions that had prevailed in Russia for decades, having been triggered by the sud-

den massive cultural invasion of the Petrine epoch. It was an instinctive extreme reaction, one that gave vent to the intense dislike of fancy foreign innovations, and expressed a yearning for older, more stable conditions that would presumably resume if one could eliminate the fancy frills from life. For in a crisis one bent down to the ground to draw strength from Mother Earth, as national folk heroes did, according to ballads, in times of trouble. Coupled with a national penchant for overdoing things, negativism in Russia took on extreme, sometimes even bizarre and violent, forms. Tolstoy was thus well within the broader scope of the times as well as the Russian national character.

Tolstoy was potentially a national writer of importance, Grigor'ev said, and he seemed to be moving toward a more organic, better-balanced approach to art. In a number of his stories he even displayed an unconscious admiration for the aggressor-hero whom he consciously tried to exclude from his works. The weakling hero of his *Youth*, indeed, was a better man than Lermontov's Pechorin, the snob who patterned his life on outlandish notions and was thus a traitor to the cause and culture of his native land (*A Hero of Our Times*). Unlike other heroes of Russian fiction who were of gentle birth, Tolstoy's protagonist was progressive and went along with the times. He broke the artificial bounds of the high society to which he belonged in search of less restricted ideals for his life. Tolstoy, Grigor'ev said, could not help searching for more liberal ideals, and therein lay his value for Russia as a future writer. Even against excesses he moved as a poet, not as an analyst, unlike other, mediocre writers on the current scene:

> Tolstoy is a poet, just as Turgenev is a poet. Even if he denies the validity of any "lofty" feelings in the soul, this still does not lead him to the philistine prosaism of Pisemsky or the bureaucratic practicality of Goncharov. Least of all does his analysis lead him toward utilitarianism. His answer to utilitarianism is "Lucerne," where he laments the highly perishable world of art, passion, history in a little yarn that unexpectedly startled everybody when it appeared because it was so out of joint with the spirit of the times. But there was nothing to be startled about. What did the critics want from Tolstoy? . . . First and foremost he is a poet. He castigates "lofty" feelings in the human soul only when they are forced, strenuously uplifted, where, in a word, the frog is being blown up to the size of an ox. And it is only occasionally that he really indulges in excesses, such as in preferring the profound grief of the old nana [*Childhood*] to the no less profound grief of the old countess, or in the depiction of a Caucasian hero who is

> really a hero, and a hero no less than the meek captain Khlopov, only he is a hero of his own epoch, the epoch of Marlinsky. [P. 540]

Most of Tolstoy's creative problems could be traced to a dearth of spontaneity in his approach, Grigor'ev explained; there was an important difference between an inborn critical faculty and an acquired, deliberate variety, which was a product of intellectual training and required constant conscious control. Grigor'ev therefore concluded that Tolstoy's main problem was character instability. Tolstoy was a congenitally inconstant individual whose creative and critical faculties continuously threatened to fall out of joint by becoming overly intense, creating a condition of imbalance that blocked inspiration. Unlike Pushkin, who was a naturally balanced genius and could go wherever he wanted because nothing ever seriously interfered with his mental stability, Tolstoy constantly had to battle various tendencies to excess. His growth as an artist was therefore impeded, if not stopped and deflected. A restless and dynamic rationalist, he tried to steady himself by an excessive attachment to the physical world of forms, and to discard or deny the validity of all manifestations of the dynamic element in life—energy. Yet forms, the epitome of the world of appearances, never satisfied him. He was always tring to "get under them" (*podkapyvalsia*). His trouble was that he could never relax enough to lapse into unconscious or semiconscious creativity—the only truly organic, productive kind. His rational consciousness interfered wth his irrational unconscious creativity causing tensions and confusion.

Grigor'ev found one example of artistic error due to the interference of intellect (consciousness) in the creative effort in Tolstoy's penchant for applying the realistic standards of his own essentially prosaic, metonymic period to the more metaphoric heroes of the past romantic period. He found another example in Tolstoy's grossly preferential treatment of the feelings of simple people. "Artificial" people could have feelings just as genuine as those of simple people, Grigor'ev said; their feelings merely reflected the dead forms and manners of the past. Tolstoy was castigating the correct things, but going about it in the wrong way. His very fierceness limited his creative perception. Instead of the hatred with which he treated sham and artificiality, he should have used Pushkin's benign, good-humored approach of gentle irony. Once Tolstoy learned how to relax and practice a more organic, less self-conscious creativity, however, he would begin to produce great

works, Grigor'ev predicted. *A Family Happiness* displayed a remarkable, almost feminine sensitivity and deserved a separate essay. Tolstoy's present creative lull was merely an arrest at the other end of the pendulum. It resulted from the despair of an earnest seeker after truth and artistic fulfillment when he confronted personal imperfections that seemed, but were not, insurmountable; the lull was due to a temporary lack of inspiration caused by inner tensions. Tolstoy, however, knew that he could find fulfillment in life only through creativity.

To his everlasting credit Tolstoy did not, Grigor'ev pointed out, turn to gimmickry when pressed for inspiration. His half-hearted attempt to arrive at a simplified solution to life's problems in *A Family Happiness* was in no way philistine. His current creative silence was simply a matter of building up creative energy; Tolstoy needed only to return to an organic, semi-conscious creativity. And soon enough, Grigor'ev said, Tolstoy would come out with greater works than ever. Two years later, after Tolstoy's first full-length novel, *The Cossacks*, and his short story "Polikushka" appeared, Grigor'ev casually noted in another article that he "was right about Tolstoy: the artist in him had finally triumphed over the analyst."

This unusual, unorthodox critique with its plausible conclusion, which was borne out by subsequent developments, establishes Grigor'ev's competence as a critic of Tolstoy. His critiques also demonstrate his ties with the civic critics, despite his substantial differences with them. He shared their historicism and, like them, thought that ideas ripened in time and thus belonged to definite periods in history. Like Chernyshevsky and Pisarev he believed that the significance of literature lay in its content, not its form, and he judged a writer by the value of his ideas. Like Chernyshevsky he was more concerned that a gifted writer continue to write than that he review current results of his work, and he thought of criticism as a means to advise, control, and direct him. Sensing in Tolstoy an unusual capacity to express a "new word," he was ready to assist him. He went further than Chernyshevsky and tried to show Tolstoy what he could do to correct his faults. His critiques demonstrate an unusually astute ability to penetrate into the workings of a creative mind and an ability to discern significant psychological factors. A more serious question, however, is whether his method is adaptable to general use. Grigor'ev offered no principles but rather personal impressions about matters involving the nature of the

literary work, thus revealing the limitations of his organic method, at the center of which remained a void left by a lack of traditional methodology that no discourse about the author and the work can fill. Grigor'ev was hardly a success as a critic and thinker. He was attacked from all sides (most notably by those whom he called philistines) for his inability to formulate his esoteric views. They were ridiculed and dismissed as incomprehensible nonsense, the ravings of an extremely abstract, confused, or demented thinker, and habitually identified by disingenuous opponents as a fixation on the soil (*pochva*), a bookish peasant theory. Such attacks gave rise to the contemptuous appellation *pochvennik*,[25] which, by implication, suggested an overly sentimental attachment to the Russian soil. The term descended to his friends and colleagues Strakhov and Dostoevsky, who were inspired by his views and tried to promote them, each in accordance with his own peculiar talent. The essence of the organic theory remained obscure to everyone outside the inner circle of its enthusiasts, even though it may be said that Dostoevsky was the practitioner of the organic method and Strakhov its theoretician.

STRAKHOV

Nikolai N. Strakhov (1828–96) was the ablest and most disciplined theorist of the organic method of literary criticism. He was also its most effective proponent. In Rozanov's opinion he contributed more to the popularization of Grigor'ev's theories than anyone else.[26] He was a respected author, editor, scholar, philosopher, book reviewer, and literary critic, and a leading interpreter of Tolstoy.[27] He was also Tolstoy's longtime friend and admirer and wrote ten articles about him and his works.[28]

Strakhov tried to lay a solid foundation for the study of literature according to Grigor'ev's principles. He approached literature as a philosopher who was primarily concerned with man. He thought of the material aspects of the world as subordinate to the spirit that created the forms of organic life. An organism, for Strakhov, was an actual, rather than a substantial, category, an ingredient in a process in which the spiritual principle acted by "educing itself" and taking possession of matter. But his main concern was with man himself. Man was, for him, the hierarchical crown of nature, its focus and its living center. Acting upon man, nature displayed its hidden essence. Man's erratic, self-contradictory behavior was

the key to the world's enigma and mystery. The mystery extended beyond the limits of the world, to the absolute. It was therefore futile and wrong to interpret man's conduct rationally. Interpreted rationally, man's destiny led to his dissipation in physical nature. His life was then deprived of meaning, toward which nature moved in man's development. The meaning of human life could be probed with the aid of a literature that rose from the depths of national life and reflected reality in more than rational aspects.

Strakhov's critical views and methods for the study of literature reflect these ideas and are characterized by thorough historicism. In agreement with the precepts of the organic theory, he insisted that to provide healthy control and guide the nation toward spiritual development, literature needed to have a firm basis in national, regional, even local reality. The writer had to be thoroughly familiar with the locale and customs of the region about which he wrote. Strakhov's evaluation of Russian writers also considered the quality of their ideas and their ability to reflect and to contribute to the evolution of the nation's spiritual and historic goals. He judged writers harshly if they failed to make a contribution. Strakhov thought of Gogol, for example, as a writer who failed to see heroic qualities in Russian life. Nikolai E. Saltykov-Shchedrin was a writer of the grotesque, a jester who amused without edifying the public (p. 351). Turgenev lacked a firm ideology, did not know where he was going, and therefore could not be a good critic (pp. 299–306). Strakhov based his opinions of critics on the same principles. He thought that Grigor'ev was the best, if not the only, Russian critic of merit, the founder of Russian criticism. Belinsky was an "enlightener" who had strayed into determinism. A critic, Strakhov said, had to be thoroughly familiar with the background of the work he reviewed. He should not argue with the author needlessly, nor judge him precipitately. His task was to reveal the essence of the work, to understand its soul, to feel its charm, to know its message and its power as an organic and unmediated whole. He would then find the criteria by which to judge it.

Like other Russian civic critics, Strakhov believed that the Russian people and writers needed current models to emulate in life and art. He was enthusiastic about the form and content of *War and Peace*, which he believed served such a purpose. He was concerned with the need to evolve original forms for Russian literature. Euro-

pean forms had served as models for Russian writers too long. These forms were geared to a foreign reality far too complex and rigidly dominated by tradition. That tradition was structured around older, more sophisticated forms of life that had no true counterpart in Russia. For instance, it was difficult to write a typical romance about Russia. Ever since Pushkin, moreover, Russian writers had been struggling to evolve new forms to escape the pressure of foreign molds. Pushkin's novelette *A Captain's Daughter* was an early example of this generic research. It was pursued further by Sergei T. Aksakov (1791–1859) in *A Family Chronicle* (1856), but *War and Peace* was the first real breakthrough: a complete prototype, a selfcontained work of fiction without too many of the direct referential roots in specific historic reality that characterize nonfiction. *War and Peace* was not a romance, although it did have a strong romantic interest, Strakhov said. Nor was it a historical novel, since it did not romanticize historical figures. It was a realistic novel written in an open, unpretentious manner that, Strakhov claimed, was peculiarly well suited for writing about the Russian scene, which was relatively unprepossessing—a land poor in spectacular features that discouraged romanticization. Stakhov labeled this Russian genre the family chronicle. He tried to imply a natural formal connection between the genre and the Russian scene. He pointed out that the genre benefited from having few formal restrictions. It had a broad scope and many characters who, if not exactly ideal Russian types, could still be considered attractive models of conduct. It emphasized not so much the unique and individual as the typical familial, tribal characteristics of the people. Its casual, rambling narrative included a great deal of concrete detail without the need to tie it in with an elaborate plot; it sustained simple unpretentious manner, almost like a folk tale, without any of the intricate plot structure found in European romances. The narrative was not studded with incident, adventure, or suspense. Its unpoetic form emphasized content by drawing less attention to itself:

> There is in Russian literature a classical work with which *War and Peace* has more in common than with any other work. That work is Pushkin's *A Captain's Daughter*. [P. 221]

> And so, guided by comparison, we have found, at last, a name for the genre to which *War and Peace* belongs. This is not a romance, and not a historical novel, nor is it even a historical chronicle; it is a *family*

> *chronicle*. And if we add that what we immediately have in mind is a work of literary art, our definition will be complete. [P. 223]

Strakhov made some effort to suggest that this was a uniquely Russian genre—a factor that would endow it with the characteristics of folk art, an expression of the anti-individualistic Russian mentality and tribal national character:

> This is a most original, almost unique genre not found in other literatures. It is a concept that has intrigued Pushkin for a long time, until he finally worked it out to his satisfaction. The two most salient characteristics of this genre, its distinguishing features, are suggested by its name. First of all, it is a chronicle, that is, a simple straightforward narrative without any twists of the plot or involved adventures, and even without a superficial formal unity and cohesion. This form is evidently simpler than a romance, it is nearer actuality, the truth: it wants to be taken for a true story, not just a simple likelihood, a piece of fiction. Second, this is a true story about the *life of a family*, and not about the adventures of a single protagonist upon whom the entire attention of the reader must focus but about events that are important in one way or another to the whole clan. It is an though the author were equally concerned about all members of the clan whose chronicle he writes, and who are equally heroes as far as he is concerned. And so, the focus of attention, the center of gravity in the book is invariably on the relationships between the members of the clan, their intimate family relationships, and not elsewhere. [P. 223]

Yet, Strakhov said, Tolstoy did not neglect formal considerations. On the contrary, in *War and Peace* his craftsmanship had reached new levels of artistic maturity. He was able to recreate reality to the smallest detail. And he was equally at home in the depiction of outer reality and the inner world of his heroes, which he conveyed in clear and simple language, thus making it understandable to any reader:

> In *War and Peace* the author's talent is in his complete command. He applies calmly and deliberately the results of what he had obtaned in many years of arduous practice. What firmness of hand! What freedom and confidence! What clarity and sharpness of line! It seems as though nothing were too difficult for him; wherever he directs his eye, be it Napoleon's tent, or the upstairs section of the Rostov home—everything reveals itself to him in the smallest detail as though he had the power to see into anything at will—that which is, and that which was. Nothing can stop him; difficult scenes where conflicting emotions struggle within the soul, elusive, barely perceptible feelings he catches as though offhand, and then deliberately

> puts on the final touches, draws the last line. He has not only depicted for us to see, with the most amazing truthfulness and attention to detail, say, the unconscious heroic actions performed by Captain Tushin; he also looked inside the good captain's soul, listened to and recorded the words that he was whispering to himself without being aware of what he was doing. [P. 260]

Tolstoy's narrative, Strakhov said, was panoramic but not static. For all the vividness and pictorial quality of his descriptions, he was no painter of murals or icons. He achieved his greatest effects with an ingenious and accomplished realistic technique that avoided direct intrusion by the author. The reader made contact with everything that went on through the senses of the participating characters. With this technique Tolstoy achieved the impression of tremendous verisimilitude.

Strakhov was most impressed with Tolstoy's psychological skills and praised the realism and effectiveness of Tolstoy's psychological descriptions, especially those related to man's eternal concerns: "The creativity of our artist attains its highest power wherever he touches upon the everlasting interests of the human soul. Prince Andrei gave up his interest in mundane affairs on the field of battle by Borodino where he was mortally wounded. From then on he had only personal matters to take care of—his meeting with Natasha and death. The depiction of that meeting and the growing understanding and inner lucidity achieved by Prince Andrei before his death is a superb artistic accomplishment, a genuine revelation of the mysteries of the human heart, staggering in its profundity" (p. 275). Stakhov therefore defined Tolstoy as primarily a psychological realist. This factor had, for Strakhov, considerable importance. Since he was primarily concerned with man, he saw Tolstoy's epic as a novel about mankind, its failures and its greatness. Tolstoy had sufficiently perfected his technique of psychological analysis to achieve undistorted penetration deep inside his characters and to permit the development of character. Strakhov particularly admired Tolstoy's skill in revealing and juxtaposing individual and familial characteristics to bring out the individuality of each character:

> Count L. N. Tolstoy . . . had made a reputation for himself in his previous works as an amazing master in the skill of analyzing all kinds of psychological changes and conditions. This analysis, which was at that time pursued with a certain impassioned bias, sometimes

> became picayune, acquired a tense, incorrect slant. In the new work all these excesses have been eliminated. . . . The artist's powers found their limits and settled within their shores. His whole attention is now focused on the human soul. . . . Nothing distracts the author, and with him the reader, from peering intently into the inner world of individual characters. [P. 195]
>
> The human psyche is depicted in *War and Peace* with a realism unmatched in our literature. . . . We see, for instance, how Count Tolstoy's characters grow. [P. 205]
>
> The individual psychology of Count Tolstoy's characters is so clearly framed by individuality that we can trace the *family traits* of people who are related to each other by blood, . . . to the point where some of the shadings can only be felt, but could be no longer differentiated by words. For some reason one feels, say, that even Vera is a genuine Rostov, whereas Sonia has a soul of a different root. . . . Characteristic traits, national psychological features, are captured and presented with consistent subtlety. . . . Individual psychological features emerge most vividly and with not a trace of exaggeration. [P. 206]

Strakhov was careful not to violate the spirit of the organic theory, which, on the whole, had only negative things to say about analysis. He tried to extol the virtues of Tolstoy's analysis as against the shortcomings of ordinary analysis. He said that Tolstoy's analysis actually served the purposes of synthesis. It was directed at the essential, living features of people and was, as such, selective in the sense that it aimed at uncovering the spiritual substance and rejected the overlay of vain and shallow interests pursued by the majority:

> Count Tolstoy's analysis is wholly directed toward ferreting out the genuinely alive manifestations of the human psyche. It is not just a poetic device that randomly dissects every living phenomenon it encounters and indiscriminately incorporates it in art. . . . His analysis is a discriminating tool that cuts deliberately to pieces—yes, but in order to find the living parts and throw away the dead ones! [P. 154]
>
> The poet teaches the reader how to become aware of the ideal, poetic qualities hidden in reality. Poetry is concealed from us by deep layers of triviality, pettiness, filth, and senseless vanity in our commonplace pursuits. We are totally unaware of it because of our own impenetrable indifference, somnolent indolence, and egotism. The poet directs our attention onto all this, so that we see it by the light of his analytical genius that he sheds upon all that *muck in which human life is bogged*, and lets us know how to find even in the darkest corners the

> spark of divine fire. . . . This is no Gogol who throws the blinding light of his lofty ideal upon the sordid, hopelessly *banal essence of the common man*; our artist knows how to discern, in all that awful banality that the world sees, the essential human dignity that still resides in every man. [P. 202]

Committed as he was to notions about the universality of conflict upon which life is based and to the corresponding division of living things into victims and predators, Strakhov had less praise for Tolstoy's other selective practices, such as the preferential treatment accorded in the novel to the meek hero. He heeded Grigor'ev's concern with harmony and the balanced development of the national psyche, and in Grigor'ev's opinion Russians tend toward extremes of sloth, negativism, and stagnation. Strakhov himself deplored the nationwide movement among Russian writers toward a cynicism about personal dynamism and aggressive behavior, while favoring such defensive virtues as patience and fortitude in adversity. He reminded his readers that Grigor'ev always called the lopsidedly skeptical attitude negativism, and ascribed it to the cultural shock experienced by Russia in the post-Petrine period of its history. The shock had forced the Russians into a defensive posture of rejection toward all things foreign, including sophistication and personal dynamism. Strakhov said that for a long time this intrinsically wrong, cynical, philistine attitude had hindered the evolution of a genuinely dynamic positive hero in Russian fiction, but Tolstoy was evidently able to overcome the effects of Gogolian negativism and write about the positive side of Russian reality. Strakhov repeatedly emphasized the importance of *War and Peace* as a national epic that offered the people standards of uplifting personal conduct. He emphasized the moral value for Russia of new national prototypes of heroic behavior developed by Tolstoy, speaking of them as though they were a valuable tribal hoard, a national treasure:

> Purely Russian heroism, the essence of purely Russian heroic behavior in every possible sphere of life—this is what Count Tolstoy gave us, this is the main achievement of *War and Peace*. If we look back on our literature in the past, we should see more clearly what a tremendous favor the artist has done us. . . .
>
> The task of our whole literature after Gogol consisted mainly in finding prototypes of Russian heroism, to compensate for that negative attitude toward life Gogol adopted, to understand the Russian reality in a wider, more correct sense, so that our national ideal could

> no longer flee from us, an ideal without which no nation can survive any more than a body can live without a soul. To find this national ideal of ethical behavior long arduous efforts were needed; the work of search was carried, consciously and unconsciously, by all our artists.
>
> The first to solve the task, however, was Count Tolstoy. He was the first to overcome all such difficulties. He struggled with, and conquered in his own soul, the tendency toward nihilism and, having freed himself from it, began to create images that incorporate the positive sides of Russian life. He was the first to show us the incredible beauty of that ideal which until then only the perfectly harmonious soul of Pushkin was able to see, a soul always open to every great experience. In *War and Peace* we have again found our precious national ideal, and now no one can take it away from us. [Pp. 282–83]

Nevertheless, Strakhov believed that a balanced view of reality must presuppose the opposite or compensating value in everything. So, he assumed that it was a residue of negativism that was still hindering Tolstoy in his efforts to create positive dynamic heroes. It seemed as though the entire epic was aimed at proving the dynamic hero negative and insubstantial, while giving credit exclusively to the meek, passive type:

> *War and Peace*—this huge, colorful epos—what is it if not an apotheosis of the meek Russian type. [P. 248]

> It seems as though the entire story of *War and Peace* is designed to prove the superiority of passive heroism over one that is active and that everywhere in the novel turns out to be not only vanquished but even ridiculous, not only powerless but harmful. . . .
>
> According to the meaning of the whole story, the predatory type here is deprived of any constructive function. And yet, speaking generally, it can hardly be denied that bold, resolute people would have at least some effect upon the overall course of events. [Pp. 284–85]

Strakhov surmised somewhat regretfully that it was aparently up to another writer to develop an active Russian hero. Tolstoy, at least, did show the moral superiority of the proverbial Russian virtues of patience and long-suffering forbearance over naked aggression. He had proved that the Russian people who were willing to accept the innate limitation on the human frame could, in turn, grow freely in spiritual stature. Western man, symbolized by Napoleon, had chosen the opposite course: he had accepted the limitations of his spiritual makeup by emphasizing his rational nature. As a con-

sequence, he was driven to extend and aggrandize himself with material things, including territory, and further dissipated his spiritual substance. The war of 1812 had demonstrated the superiority of the Russian national ideal—that of "simplicity, goodness, and truth"—over the international Western ideal of aggression and expansion.

Strakhov treated the war of 1812 and its reflection in *War and Peace* as a holy war where the weapons were moral virtues and the great issue the struggle between them. Accordingly, *War and Peace* was not only a great national epic but a morality piece. It was meant to expose the false virtues of intelligence, external distinction, accomplishment, and perfection of form subscribed to by the West as empty of substance and valuable only insofar as they served a true, simple, and good purpose. Appearances, no matter how impressive, were otherwise of little or no consequence. In this instance, Strakhov pointed out, Tolstoy functioned as an *international* sage who took it upon himself to teach not only Russia but the West standards of personal and national integrity:

> The artist set himself the task of depicting true greatness as he understands it, and juxtaposing it to false greatness, which he rejects. This task was executed not only in juxtaposing Kutuzov and Napoleon but also in depicting in great detail this epic struggle as it was carried by the entire nation, the pattern of thoughts and feelings of every soldier, the moral outlook and the whole way of life of the Russian people, the daily events of their lives, their way in which to love, to suffer, and to die. The artist showed as clearly as possible that which the Russians as a tribe believe to be the essence of human dignity, how their ideal of greatness lives even in feeble souls and never leaves the strong even in times of error and moral degradation. This ideal consists, according to the formula given by the author himself, in simplicity, goodness, and truth. It was simplicity, goodness, and truth that conquered in 1812 the power that did not respect simplicity, a power that was full of pride, evil, and deception. This is the meaning of *War and Peace*.
>
> In other words, the artist gave us a new, Russian formula of heroic life, a formula that fits Kutuzov but would never fit Napoleon. [P. 281]

According to this scale of values, Napoleon, a man of tremendous resourcefulness, heroic stature, and superb intelligence, was shown as slightly insane—a man bereft of true human excellence and dignity—and his mind and conscience were really confused and lost because he served an evil purpose: "In Napoleon, this

superhero, the author sees merely a man who has sunk so low morally that he has lost all true human dignity—a man afflicted with a benighted mind and conscience" (p. 214). On the other hand, Tolstoy showed the peasant antihero Platon Karataev as inadequate intellectually and devoid of status, but morally great. Symbolizing Russia and the West, Karataev and Napoleon stood, like David and Goliath, at the opposite poles of the scale of ethical conduct for man. To supply the need of a military antagonist for Napoleon, which Karataev could not fill, Kutuzov was made his military surrogate. Thus simplicity and humility, and not heroic stature, were shown to be the essence of man; humanity rather than individuality mattered. It is easy to see Strakhov's criticism as an attempt to correlate *War and Peace* with the organic notion of life as a great current of a mysterious creative energy that gushes forth through matter and impregnates it. Strakhov used its theme to demonstrate that the physical nature of human beings was incidental to their lives and had little or no intrinsic value. People had value as carriers or, rather, conduits of the spirit of life. He claimed that Tolstoy had shown in *War and Peace* that individuals were chosen by the zeitgeist, the ineffable spiritual substance of the universe acting in history, to fulfill important, specific tasks. The spirit of the times chose certain individuals based on their particular characteristics, but the significance of individuality was limited. Strakhov compared individuation of spirit to a jet opening that determined the shape and performance of the spiritual substance that passed through it. Individuals, he claimed, were easily replaced by others with the same characteristics; and attempts by individuals to act purely on the basis of their own wishes and desires produced a hideously bloated ego and a ridiculously inept or sinister performance, exemplified by Napoleon's antics.

Tolstoy, Strakhov said, marshaled great quantities of evidence in support of this view of human nature. Vast numbers of people appear in the novel. Whole families, members of various tribes, ethnic minorities, people in all walks of life were depicted in meticulous detail. Strakhov pointed out that many were shown to be morally and intellectually inferior:

> Russia in 1812 is depicted as a sweeping panorama with vast numbers of people. [P. 212]
>
> The picture is far from pretty. Not only is it without adornment, but it includes all the harsh shadows and faults—all the ugly, crippled,

> pathetic aspects of society with which it was then afflicted in the areas of intellectual life, morality, and government. [P. 202]
>
> The stage is teeming with scoundrels, thieves, libertines, cardsharpers; the coarse and savage ways of ordinary folk are clearly shown. [P. 191].

Tolstoy made no attempt to idealize individual Russians or their leaders. Kutuzov was highly individualized, with many specific traits. Yet Tolstoy made a special point of describing him as a "shell," formed by, and now empty of, bad personal habits: "This is especially obvious in the case of Kutuzov, who is depicted as weak with age, a lazy old man of deplorable moral habits who has kept, in the words of the author, 'only the old habits of lust but was devoid of any of the lustful passions themselves'" (p. 197). As an individual he was obviously not worth very much. It seemed as though Tolstoy were deliberately punishing or denigrating those individuals who rashly allowed themselves to project their immodest desires. Natasha's willfulness brought her serious trouble, leading her onto a path of conduct morally reprehensible enough to discourage many readers from idealizing her. Tolstoy seemed bent on showing that people by themselves were incapable of sustained superior moral effort: "In depicting the human soul in its affectivity, inconstancy—emotional dependence . . . , he seems to denigrate it, rob it of its intergrity—its permanent substantiality and meaning. The spiritual indigence, paltriness, vanity of human wants and desires—this is, apparently, what the artist is trying to depict" (p. 208). Yet each human being, if he remained flexible, could achieve some fulfillment. Anyone could become a true hero, given the right conditions, if he opened himself to the spirit and accepted the message of life itself. However, those who attempted to form their own heroism and serve their own vanity could only retain the vain and empty form of heroism, Strakhov said:

> Prince Andrei and his father are truly heroic figures in the sphere of national interests. . . . Bilibin calls Andrei a hero twice, without a trace of mockery. And Bilibin is absolutely right. [P. 199]
>
> Ct. Tolstoy revealed to us that Prince Andrei is subject to bouts of terrifying vanity and ambition. . . . "I am afraid of him," says Natasha. [P. 200]
>
> The elder Bolkonsky fascinates strangers by his grand appearance. . . . In a similar manner, Prince Andrei overwhelms everyone with a

> feeling of involuntary respect for him, plays in society an almost regal role. [P. 201]

In conditions where actual heroism was not required, such inflexible archetypal forms of heroism as embodied in Nikolai Bolkonsky present an incongruous, pathetic, and sometimes frightening spectacle: "Remember how Russia's national interests become for this grand old man a matter of his personal concern. . . . He eagerly follows world affairs from his estate of Bald Hills. . . . But when the actual invasion comes and Napoleon advances as far as Vitebsk, the senile old man becomes thoroughly confused: at first he even refuses to understand what his son's letter says: he will not accept the thought that will destroy him. . . . And then he dies. The full realization of the extent of the national disaster was more fatal to him than a bullet" (p. 200). Nikolai Bolkonsky's inflexible behavior showered suffering on his daughter and distorted his own character:

> We are mortified by the dreadful picture of the relationship between the elder Bolkonsky and his daughter. . . . It seems impossible to forgive the old man for the suffering his daughter has to endure from him. . . . With consummate skill, the author has depicted for us one of the worst and most pathetic human frailties—one that is impervious to assault by either mind or will—and one that deserves our most sincere pity. Actually the old man is dissolved in boundless devotion to his daughter—he literally cannot live without her; but this love has become perverted in his heart into a desire to inflict pain upon himself and his love object. He is, as it were, constantly tugging at the inseparable bond that links him to his daughter, and in so doing, finds morbid pleasure in feeling bound to her. [P. 210]

Prince Andrei, like his father, had chosen the road of ambition (*doroga chesti*). Mindful of his father's admonition before the start of the campaign, he fell like a hero but without any real need to do so. Like Napoleon, another inhuman hero, whose first consideration was what history would say about him, Prince Andrei seemed more concerned about the people's opinion of his courage as he stood facing the exploding cannonball than with his life in the service to his land. Rigidity and incompetence marked the circumstances of the deaths of both princes Bolkonsky. Such corruption of character, Strakhov pointed out, affected various people, as the distinct parallel between old Prince Bolkonsky and the janitor Ferapontov suggested. Both men were cruel to women around them; both

chose ineffective ways of dealing with the national crisis, for neither was attuned to the real circumstances of history. Effective heroes, Strakhov explained, are typified by a common trait—an ability to act unselfishly; they can completely disengage their will and act in a depersonalized manner. Kutuzov and Bagration were great military leaders who were commonplace individuals with many flaws—one decrepit, the other conventional—and each seemed curiously impersonal in action:

> Bagration and Kutuzov, whenever they begin to function as national heroes, lose everything personal about them; expressions such as bravery, restraint, or calm are hardly applicable to them—they are not really being brave, restrained, tense, or calm. . . . Simply and naturally they do their job as though they were disembodied spirits, lucid and dispassionate, able only to know and be guided unerringly by the purest motives of duty and honor. They look straight in the face of destiny. . . . They do all *they can*, otherwise submitting to the course of events and their own human frailty.
>
> In substance, though, they are simple people; and the artist has shown with an astonishing skill how, in varying degrees and measure, in the heart of each one of them is kindled, dims, then brightens again, the spark of bravery that is innate in every man. [P. 198]

Strakhov explained that a hero became filled with the spirit of the moment, for which he merely acted as a focusing device. This, moreover, was the gist of Tolstoy's military theory:

> At the core of Tolstoy's military theory, which has generated such a heated controversy, is the idea that every soldier is not merely a piece of military hardware but that his performance depends mainly on his morale—and that ultimately everything depends on this morale or spirit of the soldiers. . . . Therefore the military leaders themselves must stand in spirit at all times *above their entire army*, . . . must have the moral strength to bear its whole fate. . . . Kutuzov appears to us as though he were tied by invisible threads to the heart of every soldier. . . . It is as though Kutuzov were able to gather upon himself their entire inspiration. The fate of the battle is actually decided at the sound of his words . . . "You don't understand a thing. The enemy has lost. . . ." At this moment Kutuzov obviously stands vastly above all those Wohlzogens and Barclays; at this moment he is in tune with Russia. [Pp. 203–4]
>
> Emperors and military leaders are truly great only if and when they can learn to function as such quasi nuclei in which heroism tends to concentrate. . . . To understand heroism, to be able to empathize with it and believe in it, this is what makes men such as Bagration and

> Kutuzov great. Inability to understand heroism, disregard of, or even contempt for it constitute the wretchedness and the smallness of men like Barclay-de-Tolly and Speransky. [P. 198]

Strakhov went on to explain that Tolstoy's theory questioned the significance of the role of the individual in history, since his effectiveness and performance depended on whether or not he was in tune with the spirit of the movement. Hence Tolstoy could challenge the effectiveness of Napoleon's orders, other than those given on the spur of the moment, and debunk the conventional idea of heroism. Yet, Strakhov said, the theory was only part of a much larger idea consistently reiterated throughout the book: the assumption that no one could control life—the spirit that directs large-scale events. It was this spirit of life, and not any human leader, no matter how famous or charismatic, who imbued and united many men, who then acted out its own (not the leader's) dictates, regardless of individual purposes or characteristics. Strakhov doubted if the idea could be adequately expressed in rational philosophical terms. In any case, he said, its cause would have been better served if it were outlined in a separate pamphlet, outside the chronicle, where this idea was better and more fully expressed in artistic images:

> First of all, let us frankly admit that one thing interferes with the other. Count Tolstoy's philosophical discourses are, in and of themselves, extremely good. If he were to publish them as a separate pamphlet, one would be hard put to deny that he is an excellent thinker, and his book would have been one of those rare books wholly deserving of the name philosophical. But next to the chronicle of *War and Peace*, in juxtaposition with its vibrantly alive imagery, these discourses seem weak, of little interest, and hardly doing justice to the size and scope of the subject. In this respect Count Tolstoy has committed a serious error of artistic judgment: his chronicle obviously overwhelms his philosophy, and his philosophy interferes with his chronicle. [P. 288]

> It is boring and strange to read these excellent but perfectly dry arguments after having been exposed to the living people and images of the chronicle. And what is wrong artistically will invariably be wrong in other respects too. And this is exactly what happened here. . . .
>
> The fault lies not in any error of the thought itself but in its incompleteness. It is obvious that the author's entire discourse does not even begin to do justice to the meaning of the epic struggle depicted in the chronicle, and what were the forces behind it. . . .

> And so, one should not look for the main idea of *War and Peace* in the philosophical formulations of Count Tolstoy. One should look for it in the chronicle itself. [Pp. 295–97]

Strakhov claimed that throughout *War and Peace* the subtle message was that the essence of man was spiritual, and that human dignity was independent of rank and position:

> What constitutes human dignity? How is one to understand the meaning of the life of all those men, from the strongest and the most brilliant, down to the weakest and most insignificant ones, so that one does not overlook its most salient ingredient, the human soul?
>
> To this formulation we have found a hint of an answer in the words of the author himself: . . . "each one of us is, if not more, in any case no less of a man than great Napoleon himself." [P. 208]

This notion was artistically embodied in the ideal character without a personality, Platon Karataev. Karataev was meant as a contrast to Napoleon, a man in whom personality, willful individuality, and personal achievement had reached the highest expression. Napoleon had great external dignity, whereas Karataev had only inner dignity. According to Strakhov, these two men, who were so utterly unlike each other, symbolized the virtues held highest in Russia and the West. The clash between these two ideologies, one of which recognized internal spiritual, and the other external material, achievement, was acted out metaphysically on the moral battlefield of the reader's mind. A reader who recognized only external marks of distinction would see nothing in Karataev. Apart from his message of goodness, Karataev was insignificant, a selfless man. He was physically unattractive and intellectually inferior. But he projected a moral superiority and a commanding presence through the spirit of his goodness. He was a synthesis of all that was sublime and significant in the Russian character: the ability to act as an "opening" through which the message of life could be expressed. Strakhov found supporting overt symbolism in Karataev: his "roundness," which Tolstoy insisted was the central and mysterious trait of his character, suggested the function of a perfectly round opening through which the message of life flowed undistorted and unimpeded.[29] Tolstoy's theory of freedom, according to Strakhov, meant moral freedom, in substance, a freedom, independent of causality and external material commitments: "Freedom and related issues belong to an area that lies outside the boundaries of ordinary cognition, ordinary devices, and conclusions of reason

and experiment. Ordinary knowledge is nothing but a search for necessity and is therefore equivalent to a denial of freedom. Consequently, we have two areas to which thought can be applied: one, which is thoroughly rooted in reason and leads inevitably to fatalism; and another, which has its sources somewhere other than in the realm of reason and which embraces questions of freedom" (p. 292). Karataev's freedom was therefore essentially a freedom that was outside the ordinary causality of determinism. He was a man inwardly totally free, whereas Napoleon, for all his power, was still a slave of external forms, inwardly blocked, and unable to receive spiritual enlightenment. He was the prince of this world. As such he took on the features of the Prince of Darkness. Karataev, an otherworldly figure of goodness, simplicity, and truth, was the messenger of hope for Pierre, the confused Russian intellectual searching for the meaning of life, trapped in naive admiration for the false glory of European forms. Strakhov saw special significance in Karataev's lamblike sacrificial death: like Christ, he died so that his gospel could live on in Pierre.

Strakhov, who believed that the modern intellectual tended toward moral philistinism, used *War and Peace* to blast what he thought was the modern European notion of progress and many Europeans' narrow rationalism and skepticism about the reality of spirit. He interpreted the Russian nation's messianic role as that of a tribe still open to the dictates of spirit, whereas Europeans, particularly detribalized European intellectuals, had deliberately and permanently closed themselves off from receiving any messages of the spirit. Choosing the French literary scholar and author of *Le roman russe* (1886), E. Melchior de Vogüé (1848–1910), as the spokesman of enlightened Europeanism, Strakhov argued that the European mind, limited by abstract rationalism to the point of being unaware of concrete mysticism, dismissed all higher aspirations of the human psyche as if they were undifferentiable expressions of mental disease:

> This page is the most enlightening in the whole essay; it shows very well not only our critic's profound understanding of the meaning of *War and Peace* but also the limits at which his understanding stops.
>
> . . .
>
> In the opinion of the critic, all the rest is a disease; the whole meaning of *War and Peace* is reduced to an unfortunate psychological aberration that is so serious that it cannot even be understood by those who enjoy perfect psychological health. This aberration ex-

> tends, on the one hand, to the delusions of demented anarchists and, on the other, to the diseased mentality of senseless fakirs. . . . And the most perplexing, most inexplicable phenomenon of all is, to him, Platon Karataev. [P. 377]

Strakhov charged modern man with exclusive rationalism, pagan aestheticism, and a hedonism that would exclude from works of art anything that went beyond the area of aesthetic enjoyment. Modern man's hyperconscious, shallow, and unstable ego, Strakhov asserted, is ruled by the pleasure principle. He is wary of moral principles because guilt causes pain. He cannot absorb and tolerate the shock of guilt and prefers aesthetic issues. Therefore he concentrates on the political rather than the theological order of things. The basis of modern Europeans' errors, Strakhov said, was the same as that of Russian nihilists—irreligiosity—although Europeans completely misinterpreted nihilism, calling anyone who rejected their cultural conventions a nihilist. But, Strakhov said, the essence of Russian nihilism was a refusal to believe in the substantial reality of spirit—a psychological aberration he traced back to the European Enlightenment. European rationalists failed to understand Russian nihilists because they were so similar. The only difference was that European rationalists upheld the intellectual conventions of the West, and Russian nihilists did not accept these:

> The critic who did such a good job of defining the overall formula of Tolstoy's development, and sees so clearly the connection between the various phases of this development, accepts and would like to keep for himself only the pure art of our writer. The mainspring of this art, the thought that inspired it, he calls *nihilism*, and the solution to all the doubts and problems *mysticism*—two words that, for the critic, carry an obvious tone of censure, although less extreme than for many others. The so-called nihilism and the so-called mysticism of Tolstoy the critic rejects as some kind of disease or deformity. He would prefer, like so many other readers, that Tolstoy woud confine himself to writing fiction for entertainment only.
>
> A strange and impossible demand! A serious and profound thought impregnates all of Tolstoy's works, and to pull it out of them, to extract from them this core, is impossible. [Pp. 372–73]

> He correctly assumes that the main carriers of this thought are Levin and Pierre, men whom he calls nihilists in the same incorrect sense in which he uses this word. [P. 374]

Strakhov felt that Russia's search for the meaning of life was being dismissed by Europe as mere imitation: retracing the West's

erratic searches for the religious and aesthetic values of the past. He charged that modern Europeans really preferred paganism to Christianity as more congenial to them. He hinted at a parallel between de Vogüé's opinion of Karataev as a mental defective and the labeling of early Christians as cretins by sophisticated ancient Romans. Strakhov saw such intellectual arrogance as simply a limitation, a form of naïveté and moral immaturity: the conceit of a morally inferior elitist in his superior education. Yet Europe's perennial search for novel religious and aesthetic experiences, Strakhov claimed, its latent hostility to the deeper, moral meaning of Christianity, and its restless pursuit of originality and fashionable novelty revealed that modern Europe's spiritual culture was shallow, morally bankrupt, and halted at an intellectual impasse. The European mind had become defective and was running in circles:

> These are questions important beyond all measure! We are looking for a religion, Europe is looking for it too; we feel this deep-seated want in us and wait for something to come from somewhere and satisfy this painful lack of something in us, . . . for we know full well that man cannot live the way we do now.
>
> How could such an incredible predicament arise? . . . We who are looking for religion . . . want neither pantheism, Buddhism, Christianity, nor mysticism. We yearn for what we no longer can tell, contrary to the rule of *ignoti nulla cupido*. Evidently the condition of our minds is far worse than we assumed. In our heads there is a *screw loose somewhere* that cannot be tightened but keeps turning in the same spot. [P. 384]

Strakhov ascribed this peculiarity of the otherwise superlative modern European mind to a misguided determination to get by in life without religion. By contrast, he saw *War and Peace* as a product of Russia's search for spiritual fulfillment. In one sense the book was an allegory that told a new variant of the story of Christ, a variant Strakhov said, that was summed up in F. I. Tiutchev's (1803–73) poem[30] that expressed the feelings of Slavophiles about Russia and the West. The homeless Christian peasant soldier Platon Karataev could be seen as Christ disguised as everyman, or rather, one of the many possible guises and forms the spirit of goodness assumed. The novel also accounted for the aftermath of the story of Christ: the story of Peter/Pierre, the intelligent average Russian, pure of heart, at war with himself, who found peace and fulfillment by listening to the message of Karataev and became his

convert and first apostle. In this context his gallicized name took on added significance.[31] These small, usually well-hidden symbolic details that appeared throughout the book showed that Tolstoy's religious conversion was not a sudden turnabout, Strakhov said, but a new stage in a lifelong search for the meaning of life,[32] which, like Pierre, Tolstoy could discover only by going among the Russian people. This search had been pursued vicariously through all of Tolstoy's characters who suffered from an inner conflict. His early stories were permeated by a mood of somber restless inquiry, a sense of emptiness and alienation from a lack of meaningful experience:

> If one delves into the details of these skillfully written stories, one discovers that they describe with an astonishing vividness a profound *emptiness of the soul*. [P. 154]
>
> An empty, meaningless environment gave these young men nothing to go upon. [P. 167]

Strakhov saw this quest for the meaning of life and personal fulfillment as Russian, not simply Tolstoy's personal problem. The disquiet and agitation in the minds of these wellborn young people came from a lack of humility that was the result of Western European influences and education. Tolstoyan heroes suffered from an aggravated form of the same psychic discord that plagued the famous literary prototype of the alienated hero in Russian fiction—the superfluous man. Such seekers of truth were critical of their environment, repudiated their background, and sought answers in a simple life. They were uprooted idealists, educated in an artificial environment, who were unable to correlate their ridiculously high aspirations with their vacuous surroundings because these surroundings had no longer any connection with their natural roots in the life of the common people.

> Anyone can tell that this is an old story. Olenin is just like Onegin. . . . But the psychological anxiety that was responsible for Onegin's depression assumes here more aggravating forms, which is to say that the symptoms of the disease have become much more apparent. [P. 157]
>
> Count Tolstoy's heroes are invariably *protestants*, that is to say, they begin life by repudiating their own class where they soon realize that they cannot find any meaningful experience. Then they immediately plunge into the mainstream of life, filled with very noble but completely vague aspirations. . . . They have no specific goals, . . . they

> are completely up in the air. . . . And soon they notice to their complete bewilderment that they have really *nothing* to live for. . . . They are dead serious about all this. Even amusing things that happen to them do not amuse them. They are in anguish and in no mood to laugh. . . .
>
> This is the center, the point of view. Small wonder that under such psychological circumstances these people find themselves developing an attitude of great respect for anything that smacks of real life and genuine experience. . . . These are the sources of Count Tolstoy's as well as many of our other writers' sensitive approach toward the common people. They sense that the common people have direct access to the so-called immediate life. . . . The common people seem to know what their life is all about. . . . It is this attitude that allowed Count Tolstoy to depict with such sensitivity the character of the nanny Natal'ia Savishna in *Childhood*. The same attitude also guided him in depicting scenes from the life of cossacks and Circassians. [P. 155]

Strakhov pursued further the idea of the uprootedness of modern man, particularly the modern intellectual, who had lost all connections to his origins in nature. The moderns recognized that there was an important element missing in their lives; but they were unable to change because they were unwilling to retreat from the rationalistic point of view that gave them a false sense of security. For all that, such people suffered frequent bouts of despair. They made unreasonable, exorbitant demands upon themselves and their environment and were disillusioned by the discrepancy between what they saw and what they wanted.

> They present life as well as themselves with enormous demands; in the soul of everyone of them continuously stirs the question that bothered Nikolai Irten'ev: "Why is it that everything is so clear and beautiful in my soul, yet comes out so ugly on paper and is, generally, in real life?" [P. 165]

> They literally wander around the world, carrying their ideal around with them, *looking for the ideal aspects of life*. . . .
>
> In the light of their ideal they appear to themselves empty and devoid of life. . . .
>
> In their quest for the ideal aspects of life, a goal they are willing to pursue to the ends of the earth, Count Tolstoy's heroes often plunge into deepest despair. [Pp. 168–69]

Strakhov attempted a psychological explanation for the predicament of these modern sons of old Russian nobility who were overtaken by the changing times and social systems. These were unhappy, miserable young people, Strakhov said. They lacked the

capacity for discerning the ideal element in life for which they were searching and in which they found life lacking, and they regressed psychologically, yearning for a return to their childhood, which now appeared to them as the only bright spot in their bleak lives. They were ready to reject life without having really lived. Without guidance, and without external standards by which to form practical judgments (because old standards were no longer acceptable), they ended up alienated from the external world and life, and trapped within themselves. Their neurosis developed into a profound inner split.

> Count Tolstoy shows us how the process of such an inner split can come about with utmost clarity. It is not that these young people are unduly depressed by the ugliness of their surroundings, or that their surroundings put undue pressure upon them, so that they would want to put up a struggle to escape it. That would be an entirely different matter.
>
> Because of this vacuum, this absence of environmental stimuli, in which these young people spend their childhoods and boyhoods, they develop extraordinary yearnings that are as strong as they are vague. This is their problem—a problem that other, less gifted young men escape. These unusual young men are looking at an ideal so strong that in its light the commonplace world of comme il faut disappears without a trace; the ideal barely deigns to compete with such a paltry world. So, these young people turn inward, become introverted, cut off from reality. Their youthful urges, the psychic energy behind them, have nothing to attach themselves to in the shape of concrete demands and desires and turn sour. There is a dearth of guidance, examples, forms, words, and outlines that could help a strong, sweeping ideal form into something like a concrete organism. The soul, therefore, fails to grow up; there appears a crop of neurotic sufferers, people who do not know what to do with themselves, people who are constantly looking in others and in themselves for the ideal side of life, are pained by its absence, and sometimes reach the point of losing faith in it altogether. [P. 162]

According to the tenets of the organic theory, this peculiarly disturbed frame of mind, which characterized the *narodnik* movement, was a sign of psychic imbalance. The impact of formal education disturbed the natural harmony between people's bodies and minds, causing a split in their souls. The unconscious part of the personality became alienated from the ego and incapable of growth. If such a disturbance affected large numbers of people, a general state of puerility and moral chaos was the result. Such conditions were depicted in *Anna Karenina*, a novel that Strakhov thought topical

and described as a "long prelude" to Tolstoy's religious short story "What People Live By," in which the disturbance, the conflict, and the search for acceptable moral ideals were finally resolved: Tolstoy suggested that people should return to religion as a solution to their psychological problems.

If Strakhov's treatment of *War and Peace* was, by his own admission, diffuse (p. 299), his analysis of *Anna Karenina* was compact. The review, as usual, fell short of coming to the point, but the entire argument was developed in the space of only a few pages. According to Strakhov, *Anna Karenina* was a study in psychic distress from lack of religious beliefs. He clarified the function of the novel's biblical epigraph, "Vengeance is mine; I shall repay": the theme of the novel was not the punishment of someone by an outer deity for sins against conventional morality, but the destruction from within of anyone who ignored the reality of his own unconsciously spiritual nature and failed to live by its dictates. Anyone who tried to face the bewildering complexities of everyday existence guided only by his own judgment went mad from uncertainty and destroyed himself unless he accepted the limitations of his consciousness and sought spiritual guidance from within. This was the message of *Anna Karenina*, framed, as it were, by the different results of the same spiritual crisis in the lives of Anna and Levin. Worldly wisdom was almost of no use here. And worldly judgment was invariably wrong. There were no culprits, only people who erred, and then sought—or did not seek—spiritual guidance in order to cope with the problems of living. Ultimately, no one was guilty of anything but crime against himself: the crime of ignoring or willfully overruling the spiritual voice of his or her inner self: the voice of conscience.

Strakhov dealt only briefly and perfunctorily with the artistry of the novel, which he seemed to regard as eccentric and faulty in the following ways. The known, static element in it was too dominant, and the narrative was weighed down too heavily with known, concrete detail. The story was told twice on the metaphysical level, but the connection between the twin variants of the dual story line on the realistic level was too weak; the novel thus became lopsided and threatened to fall apart at the seams, as it were. There were other elements Strakhov did not like because they reminded him of philistine art. Strakhov was displeased about overrefinement of form. Tolstoy seemed unduly concerned with craftsmanship, and

parts of the book exhibited a slick, precious style. The subject matter, moreover, was commonplace, almost banal; there was not enough of the unconventional ideal element in it, and the novel was pervaded by a sense of hopelessness, of unrelieved gloom that characterizes so much of abstract, intellectualized art. For contrast, there was only mysticism, the pious, iconic world of peasants, abstracted into a static paradisiacal place, a remote, self-contained region bathed in a somewhat unearthly, steady light. Structurally, it was disconnected from the novel. Thus the link between the real concrete and the ideal abstract elements of the novel was not organic but mechanical. And the known, static element predominated. Strakhov felt that these were indications of threatened death by stifling from stagnation, an incipient separation of base elements due to disharmony that led to loss of inspiration. And, indeed, the author seemed intermittedly disgusted with his product.[33] *Anna Karenina* was Tolstoy's most cerebral, conscious brainchild so far. Furthermore, it made a somewhat unhealthy impression, although not quite one of outright insanity like much of Dostoevsky's work that characteristically suffered from a chronic excess of dynamism, the ideal element. Part of the gloom was, of course, experiential, that is, a reflection of the conditions of life. It might well be described as the general neurosis of the times.

Strakhov drew attention to the absence of external motivation in Tolstoy's latest novel, a feature that made it resemble Dostoevsky's latest work. Together with Turgenev's *Virgin Soil* and Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov, Anna Karenina* revealed a significant new trend: a universal anxiety pattern[34] in the Russian society of the 1870s, a latent mood of self-destructiveness, confusion, and despair that signified an agony of reorientation. With their old beliefs discredited, people went to pieces. Bewildered by the complexities of modern life, they did not understand what was happening to them. People from all walks of life were reexamining their souls, questioning the meaning of their existence, hoping for escape from the surrounding ethical morass. For Strakhov the neurosis had a purpose. It was an attempt to compensate for the one-sided attitude toward life that characterized modern man, and a voice, as it were, drawing attention to a side of personality that had been neglected and repressed. *Anna Karenina* depicted a state of mind that was out of harmony with itself. In a society based on the modern outlook of narrow rationalism, men developed only their conscious minds and repressed their instinctive natures. Most unfortunately,

Strakhov said, women were following, and it was they, of course, who paid an especially heavy price for their conscious development if they allowed it to be dominated by rationalism. It was the task of literature, Strakhov emphasized, to encourage understanding of this very serious problem, to offer models of conduct, and to suggest solutions; and whereas Turgenev's novel *Virgin Soil* failed to suggest anything of value, both *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Anna Karenina* recommended religion as a way of dealing with the current moral and spiritual crisis. In *Anna Karenina* the issue was given a broad, universal significance. In this novel Tolstoy was again serving the people as a sage: by introducing standards of morality, he was pointing out the way they could help themselves in order to achieve peace of mind in a new and bewildering world of rapid changes and crumbling values:

> Such is the ostensible meaning of *Anna Karenina*. The measure of modern man is taken at considerable depth. The issue is universal and relates to the life of all men and women, not just the modern type and the modern sphere of interests. . . . All this is going on amidst conditions of complete external security and physical well-being. The novel really depicts our modernity as it is; to our chagrin (or is it perhaps to our good fortune?) eternal questions in Russia are asked by ordinary people who lead ordinary lives. They are confused and in a state of shock. Their conscience is disturbed. This condition affects multitudes of all kinds of people, only, of course, among the educated classes. A landowner doubts his right to own the land; a government official no longer believes in what he is doing and assumes that his work cannot possibly be worth his salary; a well-to-do, educated man envies the peasant; a father renounces his right to enjoy his own life and wants to devote it entirely to his children; another man in the prime of life and the head of a young family finds no meaning in life and is plagued by thoughts of suicide. These and similar features attest to the fact that the firm foundations of this society have crumbled, that the ground is shaking under the feet of these people. Levin found his salvation in religious thoughts, but Anna, who belonged to the fancy world of high society, in spite of all her torture, never saw the light for one minute, did not even know where to turn to look for salvation. This total absence of any seriousness in the outlook of the so-called educated people, the lack of that element which is usually regarded as morality, is depicted with consummate skill in scenes from the life of the beau monde. But the novel as a whole depicts the pervasive psychological chaos that is dominant everywhere in all classes except the lowest. [P. 362]

> It is obvious that we are undergoing a certain inner convulsion that, to judge by what has been described above, must have a profound significance and depth. Everyone is affected by this moral upheaval,

> which he feels in his own heart as a profound uneasiness. But the feeling is as yet far from reaching real consciousness, genuine understanding; it is very difficult, almost impossible, to reconcile awareness of such things with what is today regarded as *education* and *enlightenment*. [P. 365]

The novel, Strakhov said, was an attempt to show that there were other important drives in human nature besides those of sexuality and self-assertion, and that the cultural or spiritual impulse is in the second half of life even more important than the other two, when it influences men and women as powerfully as did sexuality and aggression. For many people, Strakhov claimed, a crisis arrives in the prime of life when suddenly they need to understand those aspects of themselves that, in the pursuit of their various juvenile goals such as social success, pleasure, and vanity, they have ruthlessly repressed. Psychic health and stability were as dependent on the proper expression of the spiritual element as on the others, apart from intellect and other drives; yet many people could not conceive of this, Strakhov said, preferring to cling to the values of youth and even to pursue them in an exaggerated fashion.

The author of *Anna Karenina*, Strakhov said, had gone to some pains to imply that neither Anna's nor Levin's predicament was in any way unique or even unusual. Both Anna and Levin were, strictly speaking, average people, afflicted with thoughts and problems of average individuals, suggesting that they stood for the two most basic variants of Homo sapiens, a thinking woman and a thinking man. They were similar enough in their circumstances but different in attitude. Ordinary and extraordinary elements, in both the objective and subjective senses, were intertwined in their lives in a proportion that could be considered normal for average people. Anna was a conventionally romantic heroine, and her views were almost too conventional. Levin was an ordinary and externally uninteresting male of commonplace appearance, but his views tended to be uncommon and romantic; his circumstances, however, were almost ridiculously common and banal. Each story involved thoroughly conventional, standard types of experience:

> One reads how Karenina fell in love with Vronsky, entered into an affair with him, left her husband but, living with Vronsky, eventually became so distraught with passion that she threw herself under a train. On the second plane, which is somewhat broader in scope and has slightly more substance, we have the story of the country dweller Levin; we are told how he made his declaration of love, proposed

> marriage, followed the ritual prescribed for marriage in the Orthodox church, was married, how his son was born and, eventually, began to recognize his father and mother. The author's greatest originality is revealed in the way he treats these thoroughly commonplace events. He endows them with such startling clarity and depth that they come alive in a most astonishingly meaningful and interesting fashion. [P. 357]

Thus Tolstoy's achievement lay in his ability to imbue these thoroughly banal events with a meaning that went beyond ordinary experience and stimulated a special consciousness of them. The novel revealed the process of growing awareness within the characters who were shown, in the beginning, to be leading comfortable, routine lives in a dreamy state of consciousness that was static, akin to restless sleep and a desire for a dream experience—an adventure. They were suffering from an excess of psychic energy. The indications were that they were vaguely missing something important in their lives and were looking for fulfillment.

Mental ferment (*brozhenie*), Strakhov said, employing another standard organic term, was a sure sign of a potentially superior nature that was capable of growth. It indicated the presence of the leaven of discontent: a critical faculty—an instrument of growth—and a desire for improvement. The reasons for the discontent of Karenina and Levin were not apparent, as both led comfortable lives. Their anxieties arose from within; both were vaguely dissatisfied with the course of their mental and emotional development and, unable to determine the impediment, turned to romantic adventure for stimulating experience. Anna's fell outside, Levin's well within socially acceptable experience. The surprising result in each case was a harrowing spiritual crisis from which one of them did and the other did not recover. The matter of social approval as such had almost nothing to do with this result.

Real growth must be preceded by a genuine expansion of consciousness by an irruption of previously unconscious contents, Strakhov said, continuing his organic argument. The settled contents (the soil) of consciousness were disturbed and new ideas as the seeds of growth were implanted in the life of each protagonist by the sudden injection of romance. The romance itself, though an alarming experience, was not the seed but only the tool of growth. It stimulated awareness by removing the cobwebs from their humdrum existence. It brought other surprises—and seeds of thought—such as an unexpected and alarming consciousness of

the basic impermanence of a way of life that is based only in material comfort, without any ideal element in it. In stimulating this awareness, coincidences played a significant part. From the beginning, the course of these fairly parallel lives and series of experiences was shown to be at the mercy of circumstance. Aroused to greater awareness of the precarious nature of individual happiness that depended on social approval or purely material success and circumstance, both Anna and Levin began to search for a more enduring perspective. It is this search that started the crisis. Strakhov tried to explain:

> What is a person to do who [through superior awareness] has become a victim of such severe alienation from his environment? He can fall back upon himself, his personal life. But personal life is always at the mercy of circumstance. When Levin's brother Nikolai fell mortally ill, when his wife was in labor, when the lightning struck the tree under which his infant son was [supposed to be] sleeping, and in a thousand other petty incidents, in his very joys and successes, Levin felt that he was at the mercy of coincidences, that the very thread of his own life could be torn as easily as though it were a cobweb. This is the source of his despair. If *my own* life and its enjoyment is the only goal in life, then this goal is so insignificant, so fraught with uncertainty, so brittle, so obviously unattainable, that it can only suggest despair, can only depress a person, rather than inspire him. And at this point Levin's thoughts turn toward religion. [P. 361]

Frustration in his inability to find such a detachment drove Levin to the verge of suicide. From this intent he was saved by a coincidence and his attention to a casual remark. Anna, on the other hand, was impelled to commit suicide by a similar coincidence: the casual revelation of a trivial bit of information. The circumstances were obviously similar. What was the difference? Strakhov claimed that by stressing the haphazard nature of individual experience Tolstoy implied that the effects of experience upon the individual were more important than the experiences themselves. These effects depended upon his attitude. His attitude influenced the choices he made in response to random incidents. So, it was an error to assume that one was ever completely at the mercy of any situation. Levin searched for and found something higher than individual happiness. Anna had no such higher aspirations; selfish passion remained for her the highest level of psychic experience. As it began to burn itself out she too was consumed, because she let

herself be consumed—first by remorse and self-pity, and then by a morbid projection of her own increasing self-hatred into a hatred of the entire world.

To show why Anna did commit suicide and Levin did not, Strakhov examined the causes of significant variations in individuals' responses to comparable chance experiences. He suggested that perhaps one reason why an incidental, innocuous piece of trivial information induced Anna to reject life was the relatively abstract quality of her decisions. Anna was a city dweller, the product of an artificial form of life in which she was used to exercise control over her environment. As a result she had developed a closed mind. Her decisions arose from within. Because there was seldom need to adapt to unforeseen situations, her conscious choices were conventional and uninspired. When calm, she was vain, and her judgment was arbitrary; above all, her mind was not trained to respond to the unexpected. When she was not calm, the shock of surprise drove her to morbid contemplation and a drastic, compulsive response. At the time of her decision to do away with herself her anguish was already deep. The bewildering series of events and Vronsky's apparent growing indifference and desire to stay away from her made her hate herself and feel that she was losing control over her destiny. The hint of yet another complication was just too much: it drove her to complete despair and to rejection of life as not worth living under the circumstances. There was no point in looking for a rational explanation of her disgust with herself and utter bewilderment. Anna was deranged. She had submitted to a destructive, sterile passion that drove her to end the arrangement that held her body and soul together as too painful to endure. Her suicide, Strakhov concluded, was the result of a cerebral, abstract, arbitrary choice. Those who lost their spiritual substance and relied only on their reason knew only how to destroy life. Strakhov extended the same reasoning to other characters in the novel. Karenin, like Anna, had occasional "bouts of openness" during which he became transfigured. These bouts occurred in proximity to events like birth and death that constituted openings into eternity. But Vronsky, the perfect specimen of a modern, rational, civilized being, was finished—he remained closed at all times. Like a true spiritual cynic—a nihilist—he was only negatively affected by unconscious experience, which made him act compulsively, by triggering restlessness and morbid reflection. He found himself experiencing a

series of irrational depressions from which he tried to extricate himself by destructive acts: the killing of the horse Frou-Frou; an attempted suicide after the reconciliation at Anna's bedside; and finally, after Anna's suicide, a grand but empty self-sacrifice in a war that did not concern him.

Levin's attitude represented the contrary. If Anna's experiences were the results of her thoughts, his thoughts were the result of his experience. His anguish also was closer to real life. He was a country dweller, used to the influence of nature, to which he was conditioned to respond resourcefully and without questioning. He questioned the validity of his judgments and looked for answers outside himself. His response, Strakhov said, was spontaneous and unpremeditated. His virtue was that he was quite literally open-minded, in the sense that he was not a finished man and prevailed because of his intellectually unfinished, growing state. The peasant's remark was a casually uttered truism. But Levin was ready for it. It was enough to start him on a new train of thought. With this juxtaposition, the thematic center of the novel was conclusively established. The epigraph implied unmistakably that the whole of Anna's story must be seen as a tragic inability on her part to accept spiritual guidance. The key concept of the novel was, then, the distinction between the open mind of a seeker after truth whose humility and readiness to be guided is one of the proofs of his spiritual stature and the closed mind of a person whose inability to love unselfishly, or to grasp the validity and urgency of her other needs, destroys her life. The upshot of Strakhov's argument was that religion was also an instinct, and one of the most important ones man possesses. Refusal to give it proper recognition had a devastating effect upon the psychic health and stability of the individual.

It would be a mistake to dismiss Strakhov's emphasis on religion as simply an expression of a conventional religious position favoring escape from reality or childish illusion. Strakhov's approach was more practical than an indulgence in conventional mythology. He treated the psyche as the *ligamentum spiritus et corporis* and believed religion to be one of its natural functions. Conventional religion, if properly understood and practiced, Strakhov argued, could be of incalculable benefit to man. It could direct great natural energies of the psyche toward redemption of the whole individual. Strakhov repeatedly emphasized that man needs religious guidance to help steer spontaneous religious experience

within himself that otherwise takes destructive forms of expression. He needs to feel that the frightening images that sometimes well up from the unconscious correspond to something known and uncontroversial like the forms that religion gives to them. If this does not happen, a split develops in his nature. He may remain outwardly calm and civilized, but inwardly he is confused, a fearful savage, ruled by a plethora of archaic gods thinly disguised by civilization. Certain factors projected by primitive man as spirits, demons, and gods, Strakhov said, are rationalized by modern man as laws, ideals, art, and other externalizations of specific urges. But he is affected by them the same way. It was this dynamism of the natural religious function of the psyche that made it both futile and dangerous to dismiss it as superfluous or to explain it away as old superstition. It was psychologically speaking, as alive as ever. Indeed, rationalism itself, Strakhov said, was a religion—a narrow, one-sided, and therefore inferior religious form that served little or no useful psychological purpose. It did not account for deeper psychological experiences, those that were, for example, manifest in irrational drives and reprehensible behavior.

Strakhov argued that so long as a rationalist failed to recognize not just the significance but even the existence of certain forces within himself, he was the victim of those forces to the extent of his ignorance of them. It was in this sense that conventional religion could benefit him, by giving as yet undifferentiated thought-feelings and archaic psychological experiences a conventional outlet through the familiar religious imagery. Religion gave names and form to those powerful and dangerous forces that frequently rule the individual against his will and without his awareness of their existence. Yet these will become wholesome influences if given recognition and attention. Strakhov suggested that many a nervous depression could be cured if the sufferer could find his way back to the church, where he belonged, or experience a conversion. The solution Tolstoy had shown could not be imposed, Strakhov said, but must arise from within; even so, rational man could and should be urged toward religious experience, as the incident with Levin and the peasant illustrated. For this purpose Tolstoy's novel was remarkable. The reader was shown how respect for the religious function, even when expressed in clumsy manner and religious platitudes, could guide a man toward a deeper intellectual and emotional comprehension of his own nature. In bringing back the Christ-image as a symbol of life within the conscious mind, the

novel helped integrate alogical thinking in images with imageless logic and showed the way toward a realization of the whole man.

Strakhov's essays on Tolstoy are psychologically acute. As studies in motivation they are remarkably advanced for his day. He actually demonstrated, however incompletely, how Tolstoy's works supplied illustrations to the major problems of modern man: his struggle in coming to terms with his unconscious without the mysticism and mythology of the past. Strakhov's findings were, however, inadequately formulated. for all such subtle and felicitous insights, his critiques were, on the whole, too vague. To nineteenth-century readers not geared to recognize the indistinct nature and controversial problems of psychological experience, they seemed to contribute little to the understanding of the essential qualities of Tolstoy's work. Strakhov's nationalistic harangues further diminished respect for his intellectual integrity. But it was the obscure quality of the organic principle and method, primarily, that prevented its adherents from gaining the confidence of the reading public. The organic theory was attacked by the positivists and the rationalists as an extreme form of mysticism. Yet some of its ideas have found entry into the thoughts of other critics. Although its influence was never acknowledged, it anticipated the critical methods of Merezhkovsky, Rozanov, and Aikhenvald, to name a few, in a tradition that was long hindered by sociological criticism but gathered strength in the twentieth century. In some respects it was also the forerunner of modern psychological criticism.

DOSTOEVSKY

Fedor M. Dostoevsky (1821–81) was an organic critic in the sense that he believed that a writer was a product of his country, region, and personal life. In his view ideas were "living ideas" when they were creative and not arbitrary and abstract. As a critic he was most often concerned with the historical content of literature and with the personal history of the author himself. One can even go so far as to say that his entire critical position rests on views about literature as a revelation of personality and historical reality. However, it was also considerably influenced by the nature of his aesthetic views.

Dostoevsky's mind was keenly attuned to current reality, which he regarded as the "raw nerve" of history.[35] An essential feature of his

creative method was to implant elements of current reality in the soil of decaying literary forms of the past, which Dostoevsky extracted from the works of writers who had established or subscribed to literary traditions.[36] The principle behind his critical concepts appears to have been the same.[37] At the onset of his career as a critic and journalist he announced that he intended to promote the growth of the form and content of current Russian literature through continuous renovation of extant forms and ideas. He said he wanted Russian literature to develop models of conduct and serve as a vehicle for the moral and intellectual improvement of the nation and, ultimately, mankind.[38] His methods as a critic were developed in polemic debates with other critics.[39] He regarded polemics as a vital form of intellectual growth, a necessary function of the innately dialectical nature of the mind's imaginative function, which he opposed to logic.

Dialectics and creative ambiguity dominate Dostoevsky's critical writings. His critical method was at times symbolic; he thought of writers and critics as sages and, consequently, found the Delphic or cryptic mode of ambiguous expression both suitable and useful. Imagery, metaphor stylistic incongruity, catachresis, oxymoron, innuendo, were integral to his craft.[40] In the *Diary of a Writer* he interspersed discursive narrative entries with creative sketches, sometimes artistically accomplished,[41] which usually developed a critical comment or dramatized a statement of principle. This informal method enabled Dostoevsky to criticize sub rosa the work of other writers—errant sages, as he saw them, who had stumbled onto a mistaken course of intellectual leadership. Conscious of his own position as a national sage, Dostoevsky wrote a critique whenever he detected error; he considered it his obligation as a critic to correct the errant writer. In some of his critical remarks he appears almost as a censor. Nowhere is this tendency to exert control over another writer's ideas more evident than in his criticism of Tolstoy. Significantly, he sought to encourage Tolstoy to do what a sage should do and what Tolstoy was trying to do all his life: make his creative work into a vehicle of moral persuasion. The implied assumption, however, was that the ideas should be Dostoevsky's, not Tolstoy's.

Dostoevsky filled his novels with references to, and sometimes extensive comments about, Tolstoy's works.[42] His attitude toward Tolstoy, whom he admired as an artist,[43] was ambivalent. He was at

odds with Tolstoy on moral and philosophical grounds, and disputed with him more than with any other writer. Some think that Dostoevsky's entire career was a running debate with Tolstoy over various moral and creative issues.[44] K. Mochulsky, for instance, seems to think that *The Raw Youth* was meant to show, in detail, how unrelated to current Russian reality was Tolstoy's idea of Russian family, which corresponded to stable, orderly tradition of tribal living in the past.[45] Dostoevsky, who saw manifestations of the organic principle in everything, regarded the disintegration of the traditional family under pressure of change as one of a number of ominous changes in the fabric of Russian life. The patriarchal family structure was being supplanted by a fatherless, disorderly, disintegrating family unit (*sluchainoe semeistvo*). European civilization was destroying Russian family life. The issue, which Fridlender finds central to Dostoevsky's entire work,[46] meshes with Dostoevsky's conception of past Russian literature as tribal—a "literature of the landed gentry," which he now regarded as finished.[47] He viewed both family life and literature as integral to old Russia, which was a tribal society. These patterns were now dead and irrelevant to current reality, which was in the process of evolving its own new patterns of "civilized" life that were—for Russia—as yet nowhere near settling into any well-defined forms. Dostoevsky used as evidence the stable, "fossilized" forms of life that no longer had any living counterpart in current Russian life and yet were blithely depicted with utmost clarity in works such as *War and Peace*. Clarity and high definition, in Dostoevsky's view, were characteristics of the past and of death: relics of past forms of life, like the bottoms of long undisturbed wells. In the present, however, as in the modern family and literature, all was disturbance and muddled turbulence. The issue of the Russian family that was disintegrating through the corrupting influences of European civilization and, more specifically, rationalism, was pursued further by Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* and was one of his favorite subjects in the *Diary of a Writer*, where in a number of instances it is discussed in connection with Tolstoy's novels.

Tolstoy's novels, it seems, struck Dostoevsky as nostalgic works of modern folklore: formally highly structured Homeric poems about an idealized past.

> Really never has the Russian family been more tottering, demoralized, unsorted, and unformed than now. Now, where do you think you can find such *Childhood*s and *Boyhood*s that could be

> poeticized in such a crisp, charming fashion as was done, for example, in the depiction of his epoch and his family by Count Leo Tolstoy, or in *War and Peace*, by him also? All those epic poems of his strike us today as pictures of *hardly more than historical interest about the long-distant past.* Oh, I do not in the least want to suggest that these pictures were all that wonderful; I do not at all want them to be repeated in our time, and am talking about something else altogether. I am only talking about their character, their highly polished, "finished" formal poetic characteristics, their crispness and high definition—qualities thanks to which the epoch could be pictured as clearly and as effectively as in the two poems by Count Tolstoy. Today we do not have anything like this, there is no clarity, no definition. The modern Russian family is beginning to look more and more like an accidental affair. And that it is precisely—an *accidental family*—there is in a nutshell the definition of the modern Russian family! Its old image is gone unexpectedly, has somehow disappeared all of a sudden, and its new image. . .[48]

Among other things, this passage suggests Dostoevsky's pique at Strakhov, with whom he was no longer on good terms, whose opinion of the families in *War and Peace*—that they represented still the ideal of typical Russian family life—Dostoevsky rejected. In contrast to the child depicted by Tolstoy in *Childhood* and *Boyhood,* Dostoevsky said, the modern Russian child had become society's unloved reject (*vyshvyrok iz obshchestva*). Tolstoy's emotionally secure child only toyed with thoughts of suicide when he felt unjustly punished or rejected. The modern, unstable child felt unwanted and rejected all the time and sometimes actually committed suicide by drowning, freezing to death, or jumping out of a window. This bizarre pattern of child behavior was part of an entirely new, unprecedented apocalyptic reality that rose from the ruins of the finished patterns of the past and needed to be put into fictional perspective with new and altered literary techniques. Dostoevsky assigned Tolstoy the role of the bard of the passing epoch, which was about to disappear in events to come, in a serious upheaval, as he envisioned it, an apocalyptic convulsion, perhaps even a revolution in Russia, a kind of societal rebirth into new forms that could not be predicted but that would be radically different from the old forms of social order and family structure, which were being blithely depicted by Tolstoy as though they were still a reflection of current Russian reality:

> The crux of the matter is that some of these shades were unquestionably there before—but one finds these days features of an entirely new reality, altogether different from the becalmed milieu in

> which the old, established and rigidly structured Moscow families of the landed nobility of the mid-upper circles live and whose *history is being recorded* for us by Count Leo Tolstoy, apparently just at the time when the old Russian aristocracy, which thrived on the obsolete foundations of a society based on manorial estates, is undergoing some kind of a new, still unknown but radical fracture, at the very least some kind of an enormous regeneration into wholly new, as yet undetermined, almost entirely unknown forms of a kingdom come. [P. 47]

Anna Karenina was Tolstoy's only work to be reviewed by Dostoevsky; this review represents perhaps Dostoevsky's most substantial work of criticism. The review appeared in parts, spread over a period of months, in the *Diary of a Writer* for 1877. Two aspects of the novel were singled out for discussion. One was a timeless moral or spiritual issue, the other was current and quite topical, even political. In the main, the review focused on Tolstoy's ideological aberrations, and Tolstoy was advised to mend his ways. Dostoevsky insisted that his intent was not to criticize a colleague, but to discourage him from promoting harmful retrograde ideas. Dostoevsky was disappointed in *Anna Karenina* because it failed to measure up to his standards for the announcement of Russia's new message to Europe. *Anna Karenina* was artistically mature and powerful enough to convince Europeans of Russia's intellectual maturity, to challenge Europe's old conception of Russia as a backward and barbaric land, and to carry to Europe Russia's newest message of moral and spiritual regeneration. Instead, he found, *Anna Karenina* carried hardly more than Europe's old, cruel, essentially immoral tradition of an archaic religion of vengeful justice.

Dostoevsky criticized the message of *Anna Karenina* within the context of his extensive discussions in the *Diary of a Writer* of the elitism of Western nations and the basis of their aggressive aristocratic traditions in pagan aestheticism and Mosaic law. Dostoevsky claimed that, for all its technological and artistic leadership, it was Europe, not Russia, that was morally backward and barbaric. The argument must be viewed in the light of a much larger issue of absorbing interest to Dostoevsky: the struggle of Russian Orthodoxy against the pagan and Judeo-Christian elements of Roman Catholicism. For Dostoevsky the Church of Rome still subscribed to the spirit of the cruel laws of vengeance in the old Jewish Bible, which were buttressed by the bloodthirsty traditions of Europe's own pagan past. Ostensibly challenging those laws, *Anna Karenina*

was actually endorsing them, first by making them appear immutable, and then by adding its own cruel message of total indifference to the struggle for freedom of the Balkan Slavs. The broader argument, with Dostoevsky as the champion of Orthodoxy, was conducted in the pages of the *Diary of a Writer* on two planes. One was essentially moral and timeless and concerned the issue of justice versus grace; the other was political, Pan-Slavist, and dealt with international issues here and now. The argument on both planes substantially repeated the eleventh-century message of the first native-born Kievan Metropolitan Hilarion's "Sermon on Law and Grace," and was thus hardly a new word. Rather, this factor testified to the stubborn durability of Russia's tribal claim to spiritual world leadership. To Dostoevsky, with his eschatological leanings, the issue seemed to have become urgent.

Dostoevsky inferred that the appeal of *Anna Karenina* was based on its gory and traditional detail. *Anna Karenina* had romance, aristocratic tradition, blood, sex, and vengeance all fused together. People loved their past, Dostoevsky asserted, especially if it was tough, glorious, bloody, and painful. They took pride in such a past, and tended to sanctify the traditions associated with it. A book that reflected these traditions was sure to have appeal. *Anna Karenina* was also likely to pander to European tastes in Russia and abroad, because it was saturated with these traditional subjects of European belles lettres. Those who clung to the attractive, "frozen" forms of European culture were delighted with the book and saw in it an event of unheard-of literary significance:

> Recently I happened to meet in the street one of our writers whom I dearly love. . . . He is one of the prominent members of that revered group of five or six of our fiction writers who are, for some reason or other, usually referred to as our "Pleiade." . . . I love to meet with this nice man and dearly beloved novelist and love to prove to him, among other things, that I do not believe, and, no, never want to believe that he is outdated. . . . he right away started to talk about *Anna Karenina*. . . . "this is an unheard of thing, an outstanding piece. Which one of our writers can produce anything to compare? And in Europe—out there—who can come up with anything like it? Have they ever produced, in all those literatures of theirs, in recent years, and long before that, a work that could even come close?" [P. 315]

Actually, Dostoevsky observed, the novel as an artistic whole had little else to recommend itself. *Anna Karenina* was an excellent old-

fashioned novel of manners. Its moral message was weak, ambivalent, and substantially oriented toward the past. The book had its powerful moments, such as the reconciliation at Anna's bedside, her death, and an unexpectedly stringent topical message of ominous portent. As for the rest, it was Tolstoy's usual array of exclusive aristocratic subjects warmed over. Nevertheless, Dostoevsky did find in *Anna Karenina* truths of universal importance:

> Actually about this whole novel I am going to say no more than half a word, and even that in the form of a most necessary foreword. I began to read it, like everybody else, a very long time ago. At first I liked it very much; later, although I still liked the details so that I could hardly tear myself from them, on the whole I began to like it less. I could not help feeling all the time that I had read it somewhere before, in fact, in *Childhood* and *Boyhood* by the same Count Tolstoy and in *War and Peace* by him also, and that there the stuff was even fresher. The same old story of a family of the Russian nobility but, of course, the plot is different. Characters, like Vronsky, for instance (one of the heroes of the novel), who cannot even talk among themselves except about horses—were, of course, curious, just to get to know the type, but awfully tiresome and clannish. One would think, for example, that the love of this "stallion in uniform," as he was dubbed by one of my acquaintances, could only be described with proper irony. So, when the author began to introduce me to the inner world of his hero seriously, without irony, I even became a little bored. And then, all my preconceptions were suddenly dispelled. I came upon the death scene of the heroine (later she again recovered)—and I understood everything about the substantial part of the author's designs. In the midst of this trivial and brazen life there appeared the great and eternal truth of real life that immediately flooded everything with light. These trivial, insignificant and false people suddenly became genuine and truthful, worthy of the name of man. . . . Hatred and falsehood began to speak in words of forgiveness and love. Instead of stupid conventions of the beau monde, there was only love of one's fellow man. Everybody forgave and acquitted everybody. Clannishness and exclusiveness suddenly disappeared and became unthinkable, and these cardboard characters suddenly began to look like real people! . . . It was more than necessary to remind the Russian reader of this eternal truth: many among us have begun to forget all about it. With this reminder the author has performed a good deed, aside from having performed it as an outstanding artist.
>
> But afterward the romance began to drag on again. [Pp. 74–75]

Dostoevsky thought the reconciliation scene important enough to discuss it twice and at length. In the first discussion he related the scene to the epigraph at the beginning of the novel, and in the

second discussion, to Anna's suicide, to show that together they constituted a damning indictment of Europe's entire body of legalistic morality that was based on the principle of retribution. Each time he emphasized the moral message. The scene, he said, was an example of Tolstoy's genius at his best. He explained the meaning as follows:

> And that man should not perish in despair because he cannot understand his paths and destinies and is so easily swayed to acquiesce in the mysterious inevitability and fatal ubiquity of evil, he is indeed shown a way out. This one possibility is brilliantly outlined by the author in the brilliant scene in the penultimate part of the novel, in the scene where the heroine lies mortally ill, when culprits suddenly are transfigured into superior beings, brothers who have forgiven one another everything, beings who by mutual exculpation have cleansed themselves of all falsehood, guilt, and culpability, and thereby immediately acquitted themselves, with full awareness that they deserve now to be free of guilt. But later, at the end of the novel, in the gloomy and dreadful picture of growing despair that is traced step by step, in the depiction of that irresistible state when evil takes possession of one's innermost being, puts fetters on every move, paralyzes all strength to resist, every thought, every urge to fight the darkness that is descending upon the soul, until the soul suddenly, knowingly, lovingly, and with lustful vengeance reverses itself and accepts this darkness as light—in that picture there is such a profound lesson for human judges, for those who are accustomed to hold in their hands the measure and the scales, that they are bound to exclaim in fear and confusion: "No, I see now that vengeance is not always mine, and it is not always I who shall repay!" [Pp. 320–21]

Dostoevsky emphasized that in the reconciliation scene at Anna's bedside Tolstoy had shown how ordinary people could lift themselves onto a higher plane of reality, above their usual bondage to evil, which they expressed in petty and vicious judgments. Tolstoy's special achievement was in showing clearly and convincingly that such a reality actually existed, and was not just a mawkish figment of someone's overheated imagination (*konvul'sionerstvo*):

> The reader could see that this true life actually does exist, and that it is very real and inevitable, and that one must believe in it, and that our ordinary life and all our worries, from the most trivial and despicable ones, to those that we consider often the loftiest—that all this is, more often than not, nothing but the most fantastic vanity that falls and disappears without even defending itself if confronted with the true life. The important thing is that the author managed to point out that this moment exists, although it seldom appears in all

> its radiant fullness. . . . This moment ws uncovered and pointed out to us in all its glory and awesome reality. The poet demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that this is all actually true, need not be taken on faith, that it exists not only as an ideal, but inevitably, necessarily, and for all to see. [P. 75]

According to Dostoevsky, Anna's suicide dramatized the drastic error of stopping life by destroying its vessel, the human individual. Such judgment, which was reserved for God alone, meant interference with an unknowable quantity:

> In *Anna Karenina* a certain view of human guilt and criminality is expressed. Human beings are depicted in abnormal circumstances. Evil existed before them. Caught in a whirlpool of falsehoods, they transgress and perish inevitably. . . . This vastly complex idea is executed with formidable psychological analysis of the human soul, reaching enormous depth and power of artistic portrayal and unparalleled realism. What is made clear and plausible to the point of obviousness is that evil is rooted in mankind deeper than any socialists, clumsy healers of social ills, will concede; that no form of social organization can dispose of evil; that the human soul is what it is, that abnormality and sin issue from its own fiber, and, finally, that the laws of human consciousness are as yet so utterly unknown, so totally unexplored by science, so undefined, and so mysterious that, for the time being at least, there are not, and cannot be, any healers or *final* judges of human problems other than He who says "Vengeance is mine; I shall repay." He alone knows the *whole* enigma of the world and the final destiny of man. Meanwhile, man cannot undertake to pass final judgment on anything, in his arrogant belief in his infallibility; the time and the season have not yet come for that. The human judge must realize of his own accord that he can scarcely think of himself as the final judge, that he is a sinner himself, that the measure and the scales in his hands are an absurdity. [Pp. 318–20]

Thus Dostoevsky addressed himself first to the evils of judgment in general, and judgment by the standards of European society in particular. At the time of her suicide, Anna was upset and in no condition to comprehend anything, let alone the worth of her own life. Yet she succumbed to the temptation to judge herself rationally and dispassionately. Her analytical mind promptly condemned her guilty body, and allowed her pent-up emotions to destroy it in a spirit of vengeful sadism. Dostoevsky interpreted this fatal turn of events as evidence that strict judgment in the spirit of the Old Testament was always wrong; it led only to cruelty and the corruption of the soul. Anna's fate was a general warning never to judge

anyone by the letter of the law. Dostoevsky then expounded the dangers of dispassionate judgment:

> How, then, is this problem solved in Europe? All over Europe it is handled in a twofold manner. One solution is as follows: the law has been laid down, framed, formulated, developed and refined for thousands of years. Evil and good are defined, weighed, their measurements are taken and degrees defined historically by the sages of mankind in tireless efforts to fathom the human soul as well as by precise scientific research into the extent of the unifying power of communal living. This elaborate code must be obeyed blindly. Those who do not—those who violate it—are made to pay for their transgressions with their liberty, property, life, pay for it dearly, by the letter of the law, and without mercy. "I know," says their civilization, "that this is all very blind and inhuman and really impossible, because one cannot work out the final formula to the human problem while mankind is still only halfway down the road of its evolution; nevertheless, since there is no other way, one must stick to that which is written and stick to it verbatim and without humanitarian considerations. Or else the consequences may be even worse. . . ."
>
> The other solution is the opposite: "Since society is still organized abnormally, individuals cannot be called to account for its abuses and consequences. Therefore a criminal is not responsible for his actions, and for the time being there can be no such thing as a crime. In order to do away with crimes and human guilt, the abnormal nature of society and its structure must first be dealt with. . . . One hopes that science will provide all the necessary answers." So, this, then, is the second solution: one expects the coming of the future anthill; in the meantime, the world is being flooded with blood. Other than these two, the Western European world does not seem to have any solutions to the problem of human guilt and culpability. [Pp. 318–19]

Against this Dostoevsky argued that judgment without compassion was wrong whatever the content. He insisted on compassionate involvement. Evil was rooted deeper in reality than law or social reform. Therefore the compassionate response was the only logical one, Dostoevsky said, for once treating Tolstoy as the spokesman of the Russian point of view: "In the Russian author's approach to human delinquency and culpability one can clearly see that no anthill, and no success of 'the fourth estate,' no elimination of poverty, and no organization of fair labor practices will save mankind from abnormality and, consequently, from guilt and criminality. . . . [Consequently] the human judge . . . must . . . submit to the laws of the still insolvable mystery and resort to the only feasible

solution—compassion and love" (p. 320). Dostoevsky explained why law and social reform were helpless against evil. Evil, which grew in the hearts of men, could not be eradicated other than by way of strenuous effort at moral regeneraton from within. Each man had to lift himself up above the reality of evil. For this he needed moral support, not justice, and all possible compassion. Dostoevsky was vexed that in *Anna Karenina* this important message was buried under another message of a conflicting spirit. He blamed the author for this failure.

Dostoevsky developed his second argument on the basis of the first: it expounded the fallaciousness of any judgment without compassion, concentrating on the issues of the Balkan war, which Tolstoy had declared to be of no concern for the Russian people. Dostoevsky thought that this callous notion paralleled the immoral indifference of imperialistic Western nations toward the exalted cause of national liberation, and attacked Tolstoy on grounds that his position was morally insupportable. The attack was the least convincing part of his argument, not only because of its narrow range, but because it was misdirected. To refute Tolstoy's message, Dostoevsky assaulted the character of the author. His ad hominem argument was designed to prove Tolstoy wrong by proving him morally and mentally incompetent.

Just as analytic, dispassionate judgment could ruin the lives of individuals, Dostoevsky said, so, too, it could corrupt relations and understanding on the social and political level. *Anna Karenina* promoted an attitude of remoteness and detachment from the issues of the Balkan war and branded those who became involved in it morally and intellectually inferior (Dostoevsky's expression for it was the obscure Russian slang word *striutskie*). Tolstoy's indifference toward the oppressed Slavic brethren directly contradicted his appeal for compassion for Anna and indicated confusion in the mind of the author. Yet, this second message, Dostoevsky warned, was dangerously effective. It was likely to be heeded, first, since it came from a recognized moral authority and a teacher of the people and, second, because it was consistent with, and organically interwoven into, the artistic substance of the novel. The author from this perspective was a great sage gone mad who was leading his readers astray. Surveying the idea of great writers as teachers of the people, Dostoevsky exclaimed in half-feigned horror: "People like the author of *Anna Karenina* are teachers of society—our teachers—and we are merely their pupils. But what are they teaching us?" (p.

356). Dostoevsky intimated that Tolstoy may have poisoned the wells of his compassion by his own strenuous efforts (*potugi*) to achieve moral regeneration for himself, suffered a relapse, and now inadvertently promulgated his own sinister preoccupation[49] with a vengeance. A vicious message of political propaganda of such stringency was entirely alien to Tolstoy's nature as an artist, indicating that a reversal, or perhaps even a drastic personality change, had occurred:

> It has been a while since I met with anything like this—and in so high a concentration—in pure fiction. In the work of a writer who is an artist in the highest degree, and a fiction writer primarily, I read three or four pages of really vicious polemics on highly topical issues of the day—everything that is really important in our current Russian political and social discussions, gathered, so to speak, into one spot. . . . I am speaking of several pages in *Anna Karenina* by Count Leo Tolstoy, in the January issue of the *Russian Messenger*. . . . To my amazement, I encountered in the sixth part of the novel a scene that corresponds to really topical news of the day and, what is most significant, was not inserted deliberately or tendentiously, but arose spontaneously out of the very fabric of the artistic side of the novel. Nevertheless, I repeat, to me all this was quite unexpected, and even left me puzzled and somewhat surprised: I did not expect such viciousness in a fictional discussion of topical issues. [Pp. 73–76]

Tolstoy's sinister message, Dostoevsky claimed, basely sought to ruin the character of the Russian people by depriving them of their natural love and compassion for all peoples. Tolstoy was trying to beguile Russians into feeling no longer like Russians but like Europeans. Suggesting that galloping insanity was going to consume the great but aberrant sage, Dostoevsky lamented the loss of such an illustrious author to the Russian cause:

> Now that I have expressed my feelings, perhaps it will be better understood why I was so affected by the falling away of such an author, his decision to segregate himself from the Russian common and great cause, and the paradoxical untruth that he slanderously slings at the Russian people in that wretched eighth part of his [novel] published by him separately. He simply robs the Russian people of their most precious possession, takes away from them the main meaning of their life. . . . The fact that such an author writes in such a way is very sad. [P. 322]
>
> This is not what I expected from such an author! [P. 309]

Dostoevsky's attack upon Tolstoy was personal, underhanded, and vicious. He tried to show that Tolstoy was restless and erratic, did not know right from wrong, had a rigid (paranoid) one-track

mind (*priamolineinyi um*), and lacked the human dimension required for moral leadership. Character instability and moral inferiority were common among members of aristocratic elites, Dostoevsky claimed, and were caused by ego inflation and alienation from the people. Tolstoy's efforts to regain contact with the people by posturing in imitation of superficial aspects of the peasants' life were ridiculous. Dostoevsky dismissed Tolstoy's rustication, along with the trend fashionable among the *narodniki* to "become simple" and "go among the people," as a childish exercise in futility. He even composed an artful little homily on this subject:

> If you want to join everybody in common work—go ahead and do it, but there, too, don't do as some dreamers do, who right away go for the wheelbarrow as though saying: "See this?—I'm not a master, I want to work like a peasant." A wheelbarrow, too, is but another uniform.
>
> No, but if you really want to make a useful contribution as a man of knowledge, then go to a university and leave yourself the means for that. Important is not the giving away of the estate, and not the putting on a peasant's garb: all that is mere letter and formality. . . . All these efforts to "become simple" are nothing but a silly mummery that is rude to the people and demeaning to you. You are much too "complex" to go back to simplicity, and, besides, your education will never let you really become a peasant. Better that you should raise the peasant to the level of your own sophistication. [P. 90]

Dostoevsky identified Tolstoy's corrupted morality with what he thought to be the awful predicament of civilized Western man. Like other adherents of the organic theory and principle, Dostoevsky believed that civilized societies that retained the archaic habit of tribal societies of regarding themselves as special people—superior to the rest of mankind—were likely to develop civilized savagery called moral philistinism, and they became morally degenerate. Exclusiveness led to arrested moral growth; moral deterioration and spiritual decay tended to be abetted by material abundance. These were demonstrated in emphasis upon superficial aspects of life, demands for personal comfort, willfulness, intellectual autonomy, exploitation of one's fellow man, and moral cannibalism (*sdiranie kozh* [skinning people alive]).[50] Dostoevsky regarded any member of the Russian hereditary or intellectual[51] aristocracy who chose the aesthetically rewarding but spiritually desolate regions of Western Europe's "glorious cultural cemetery"[52] as lost to Russia. The author and the characters of *Anna Karenina* were such intellec-

tual aliens. The author had employed his talent to promote only himself. His whole novel was filled with aristocratic dilettantes engaged in sinister or vacuous pursuits. Nearly all of them were projections of the author, no one more so than Levin, whose involvement with the people was nothing but supercilious dalliance (*prazdnoshataistvo*).

Dostoevsky explained Tolstoy's ideas as rationalizations of his emotional drives. He thought of Tolstoy as frustrated and anxiety ridden because of confinement to a small, self-contained, personal universe. Tolstoy was trying to break out of it by projecting himself into his fictional characters, so far without much visible success. In Dostoevsky's view, Anna and Stiva Oblonsky were externalizations of Tolstoy's negative qualities. Anna represented their grand, Stiva their petty aspects. Levin was Tolstoy's good side: impetuous, childish, and presumably pure of heart. Continuous debates between these various externalizations supplied Dostoevsky with clues as to what the author himself was really like. The absence of dialogue between Anna and Levin, for example, suggested that Tolstoy's grand self-image was altogether imaginary, whereas the persistent petty bickerings between Levin and Stiva, sometimes characterized by acrimony and always by dilettantism, indicated that on a smaller scale Tolstoy's character was more solid.

Stiva, however, was for Dostoevsky a self-satisfied moral idiot and Levin a moral monster with a chronically inflamed conscience. Levin's nature was hopelessly split; he was confused, aggressive, and in a state of continuous psychic turmoil. The feeble stirrings of Tolstoy's better nature, represented by Levin, were always frustrated by the smug logic of his baser nature, represented by Stiva. Levin's intellectual position was further weakened by his inability to make up his mind whether he was European or Russian. The issues themselves were petty and ephemeral (*ideal'neishaia drebeden'*). In a mock-serious offer to lend them greater dignity and scope, Dostoevsky offered to rewrite some of the conversations between Levin and Stiva as conversations about law and divine grace in terms of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, with Stiva playing the part of the devil in the shape of a generalized poor man, whose savior Levin fancied himself to be:

> Now Levin, a Russian heart, confuses the pure Russian and only possible solution of the issue with its European formulation. He

> confuses the Christian solution with a historic "right." Let us imagine, for the sake of clarity, the following picture:
>
> Levin stands, deep in thought, after the nocturnal conversation with Stiva at the hunt, and painfully, like an honest soul, wants to solve the question that has him thoroughly confused and which, therefore, must have given him trouble before.
>
> —Yes, he muses, agonizing over the decision—yes, to be honest about it, how can we, as Veslovsky put it just now, "eat, drink, hunt and do nothing, while the poor man is always, always at work?" Yes, Stiva is right, I *must* divide my estate among the poor and go work for them.
>
> The "poor man" stands beside Levin and says:
>
> —Yes, of course you must, you are morally obligated to divide your estate among us, the poor people, and then go to work for us.
>
> Levin emerges completely in the right, and "the poor man" completely in the wrong, of course, if we judge the whole thing from, so to speak, a transcendent point of view. [Pp. 84–85]

Dostoevsky suggested that Tolstoy/Levin would be deluding himself if he imagined himself to be addressing the masses of Russia's poor. Actually, he was talking only to himself, in the shape of his alter ego Stiva. He lacked the stature to be a spiritual leader.

The review contained numerous diatribes against Levin, whom Dostoevsky believed to be the spokesman of Tolstoy. Dostoevsky accused Levin of addressing issues beyond his moral capability. Dostoevsky was, for example, particularly irked by Levin's repeated assertions that he was "the people," and tried to disprove such a contention by showing it as wishful and puerile:

> Levin like to refer to himself as "the people" but he is a master, a young gentleman of the mid-upper circles of Moscow nobility, whose history Count Tolstoy has mostly been writing. Although the peasant didn't really say anything particularly new to Levin, he nevertheless nudged him toward an idea, and it was this idea that stirred his faith. That alone ought to have been enough to make Levin realize that he isn't quite yet people and that he therefore mustn't refer to himself constantly as "I am myself of the people." However, I'll come back to that later. I only want to say that those like Levin, no matter how long they may rub elbows with, or live next to, the people, will never completely merge with them, more than that—on many points they may never even understand the people at all. Mere conceit or an act of will, especially such a fanciful one, is not enough. It is not enough just to say so and expect to become immediately one with the people. [P. 327]

The people, Dostoevsky said, were more mature and had higher ideals than Levin. Levin could not understand these ideals because

of his self-absorption, and because these ideals had their source in the people's mature faith in God.[53] His own erratic pursuit of religion was narcissistic and essentially destructive. Bored, restless, and irresponsible, Levin was like a child who would introduce senseless but exciting complications to life. He naively assumed that the rest of mankind was as childish as he, a comparison that could hardly stand as a universal rule, Dostoevsky said, but was valid in respect to Levin's attitude toward universal questions. Levin, he maintained, was simple, but not pure of heart. He was merely a puerile idealist whose background led him to fervent beliefs that had no basis in, or relation to, reality. Dostoevsky envisioned Russia of his day almost as though it was Kievan Russia, about to be invaded by alien hordes. He suggested that this sickly idealism was another one of the ominous signs of the times; the arrival on the scene of this naive yet dogmatic breed of fanatical revolutionaries, ill trained and ill prepared to lead, who did not know what they were doing and heralded the destruction of Russia because of their incompetence. And yet her old leaders were being replaced by history because they had become morally corrupt:

> These are multitudes . . . of people of a new root . . . who absolutely *must have the truth*, only the truth, without any conventional lies. . . . This is the new Russia of the future, of honest people who want nothing but the truth. . . .
>
> People of that feature convulsively, almost morbidly, strive to get answers to their questions. . . .
>
> Oh, they are also quite intolerant. . . . I only want to herald at the top of my voice that they are driven by genuine feeling. . . . Among them are aristocrats and proletarians, clerics and agnostics, rich men and poor, learned men and ignoramuses, old men and young girls, Slavophiles and Westernizers. As to convictions the discord among them is unimaginable, but the striving toward honesty and truth is unshakable and inviolable. . . . I particularly want to augur, for all to hear, that they are already here, right next door to the frightful corruption [of the old establishment], that I see and sense the coming of these people who are taking over, and to whom the future of Russia belongs. [Pp. 82–83]

Dostoevsky, who repeatedly lamented in the *Diary of a Writer* the lack of competent new leadership, admitted that there were parallels between the character of Levin and this new breed of people, as there were between Stiva and the corrupt old aristocracy that was about to give up its ghost as well as the control of the Russian society. In this sense Tolstoy had successfully represented the

major conflict of the times and his protagonists as the major types of the times: the new heroes and the old villains of modern Russia. They symbolized to a considerable extent the confrontation between old and new society: "The artist who juxtaposed this moribund cynic Stiva with his new man Levin juxtaposed, as it were, this hopelessly debauched, terribly numerous old Russian Establishment that has practically signed its own death warrant with this society of the New Truth, who cannot stand, not even for one moment, to feel guilty in their hearts, and who will give anything just to tear from the heart this intolerable feeling of guilt" (p. 83). All the same, Dostoevsky said, Tolstoy hardly deserved to be called a great prophet, because he was writing almost exclusively about himself. Dostoevsky insinuated that even if Tolstoy/Levin was one of these new fervid truth-seekers, the good seed of moral rebirth was stifled in his heart by the seductive influence of his own aristocratic background. Desire for salvation was not enough. The break had to be clean, and the renewal complete. And like the rich man of the Gospels, Tolstoy was much too fond of the old values to give them up. In his heart Levin was inextricably tied to Stiva. It was only in the realm of imaginative fiction that Tolstoy succeeded in juxtaposing the two. In real life they were of one piece. This was so because they both believed in the outworn forms of society and faith, one cynically and the other fervidly. Tolstoy created such types, not because he was himself attuned to history, but because he cared more about his own ideas than the truth. He was more interested in being proven right than in finding truth.

To argue this contention Dostoevsky went so far as to charge Tolstoy with lack of artistic integrity. Secondary characters in *Anna Karenina*, he said, were deliberately introduced to magnify the personality of Levin/Tolstoy. An outstanding example of such artifice and violation of artistic truth was Koznyshev, Levin's half-brother, who appeared only to serve as Levin's foil:

> Sergei Ivanovich was depicted in this comic fashion rather skillfully already earlier in the novel; but in the eighth part it becomes altogether clear that he was conceived in the first place only in order to serve at the end of the novel as a pedestal for Levin's triumph. But as a character he is most successful.
>
> However, one of the least successful characters is the old prince. He, too, sits right there, holding forth on the Eastern question. He is a thorough failure in the entire novel, not only with regard to the Eastern question. [P. 329]

Dostoevsky asserted that characters in *Anna Karenina* were made ridiculous, plot was twisted, scenes were set up, and evidence was unfairly stacked simply in order that Levin could prevail in the novel's arguments. In these disputes Levin revealed his aggressive personality and his disturbed condition. He was abusive and lashed out indiscriminately at innocent Russian war volunteers. Levin was assisted in this unsavory practice by an older version of Stiva, their father-in-law Prince Shcherbatsky, whom Dostoevsky took to be Tolstoy's idea of an enlightened old man: a refurbished version of an eighteenth-century *moraliste*, a cantankerous old cynic with a banal sense of humor:

> He is one of those virtuous characters in the novel, designed to be a model of positive beauty of character—without, of course, sinning against realism. He has his weaknesses; one might even go so far as to say that he is even a wee bit funny but, of course, in a most respectable, dignified manner. He is the Mr. Goodheart and the Mr. Reasonable of the book but, of course, not like the Mr. Reasonable of Fonvizin's [play *The Young Hopeful*, 1783] who, once he gets started, lets loose a steady stream of nothing but common sense, uttering, like a trained donkey, naught but truisms. No, no, here we have humor and, generally, the human sides. But the really pathetic thing about this elderly gentleman is that he was designed as a wit. As a graduate of the school of life, and father of numerous although settled progeny, in his declining years he watches everything around him with the quiet smile of a wise old man, a smile, however, far from all that mild and benign. He advises, certainly, but beware of the playfulness of his wit: it cuts to the quick.
>
> But, lo and behold, a surprise occurred: our Mr. Reasonable, who was designed as a wit, turns out to be, and heaven only knows why, not just short on wit, but, worse luck still, positively banal. Of course he tries, and very hard, all through the novel to say something intelligent, but that intention is as far as he ever gets, really nothing, nothing at all witty comes out. The reader finally, out of the goodness of his heart or embarrassment, is anxious to give him credit for all those constipated efforts at expressing wit as though it actually were wit; but what is much more serious is that this self-same person in the eighth, separately published part of the novel is again designated to express things that are—let us face it—once again hardly witty (in this sense the old prince stays firmly in character), but, on the contrary, things cynical and slanderous concerning part of our society and our people. Instead of a Mr. Goodheart, suddenly we have a cynical aristocrat—a superannuated member of an exclusive club who runs down our people and denies that there is any good to them. These are the rumblings of a clubman's senile irritation, an old man's bile. [Pp. 329–30]

Dostoevsky claimed that old Prince Shcherbatsky looked upon the Balkan war of liberation as a revolt. He was a retrograde, a pro-Western imperialist and, as a member of the international aristocratic elite, a firm supporter of any established regime. His superior stance was based on the dim notion that all freedom was rebellion, that freedom and aggressive irresponsibility were the same, and that all freedom fighters were highwaymen.

One can readily see that this philosophy did not sit well with Dostoevsky, for whom, as Berdiaev has shown,[54] freedom was a dynamic force that realized each man's potential abilities. For Dostoevsky the Balkan war was more than a symbol of national liberation and a political issue. He approved of the Balkan fight for freedom and passionately affirmed the right of Russian volunteers to participate in it: their compassionate involvement in this war was a sign of mature morality. His real concern, however, was metaphysical and, as usual, he dared not express it in so many words for fear of being branded a mystic: Tolstoy was unwittingly aiding Antichrist in his fight against God. A denial of the right to compassion was tantamount to stifling man's most precious characteristic.

Dostoevsky's critical position is too unconventional to allow meaningful comparisons with other critics. Evidently he took his own function as a prophet quite seriously: his dire predictions of the coming changes in the social structure of Russia, perhaps even a revolution, and his keen sense of historic reality imply that he did. In any case, it is clear that he wrote his critique of *Anna Karenina* with a primary concern with its effect, and its author's, on the "raw nerve" of history, particularly Russian history. Dostoevsky was convinced that his function as a guide to other writers and critics far exceeded in importance his function as a literary critic. In conscious intent, then, his attack upon Tolstoy was not directed against him as a man and artist but as an erring sage.

But because they did not espouse the same ideals, it seems, Dostoevsky conceived a personal antipathy for Tolstoy. While the outside world resounded with praise for his humanity, Dostoevsky as a critic of Tolstoy was cruel and tyrannical. In contrast to the highly impersonal character of his public attitude, his private sentiments were extremely personal and oversensitive, motivated by secret prejudices—a readiness, for instance, to misconstrue views that

were in opposition to his own as having ulterior motivation. He constantly made negative assumptions about Tolstoy in order to invalidate Tolstoy's arguments in advance—in defense, naturally, of his own touchiness. His sensitivity made him acrimonious and aggressive; his insinuations multiplied. His personal remarks sting with resentment and, it seems, envy. Magnanimous as he was in sacrificing his own failing health in the service of his country's intellectual goals, Dostoevsky's feelings are revealed as petty, crotchety, and conservative. Anything that did not fit into his formula was seen through a veil of unconscious hatred and was condemned accordingly. These suppressed feelings had a markedly deleterious effect on his thinking, which would otherwise have been almost beyond reproach. His moral formula, which otherwise might claim general recognition, underwent a characteristic alteration as a result of his unacknowledged bias. Dostoevsky became rigidly dogmatic. Truth was no longer allowed to speak for itself; it was identified strictly with his views and treated like a sensitive darling whom Tolstoy had wronged. For that Tolstoy was demolished with personal invective, and no argument was too gross to be used against him. Dostoevsky's truth had to be trotted out, until eventually it dawns on the reader that it was not so much a matter of truth as a personal defense of its begetter.

The viciousness of the attack and the recklessly biased assessment of Tolstoy's psychological condition raises perhaps some questions about Dostoevsky's competence as a psychologist and a judge of character. But apart from that, Dostoevsky's study raises many interesting questions about the nature of Tolstoy's work, some aspects of which have never before been discussed with much thoroughness. Undeniably, there is a good deal of truth in Dostoevsky's view of Tolstoy as marking the end of the period of Russian literature that dealt with the life and the landed gentry, i.e., an elitist literature. Nevertheless, one cannot agree with Dostoevsky that the vices he claims to have discovered in Tolstoy are present in *Anna Karenina* to such an extreme degree. What Dostoevsky saw as efforts by Tolstoy to aggrandize himself were really the consequences of Tolstoy's peculiar self-analytic art. Some expressions to which Dostoevsky objected, such as Levin's (or Tolstoy's) claims to being "one of the people" or denials that a generalized feeling of compassion could ever exist (other than as a psychologically morbid condi-

tion), were rhetorical phrases calculated to reinforce the message. They were not different in kind from Dostoevsky's own tendentiousness.

Dostoevsky's criticism of Tolstoy's moral position is also disputable. Dostoevsky did not view Tolstoy's work as a whole. His extravagant strictures in the face of his immense admiration for Tolstoy's artistry reflect his own exaggerated concern for literature as a carrier of ideas. It is clear, then, that what Dostoevsky saw as Tolstoy's misconceptions indicate some of Dostoevsky's own rhetorical limitations. He himself was unable to tone down his writing. His own manner was often close to true sublimity, but often also to extravagance and bombast. In his own works such a style was often effective, but in his critical writings the same features often failed to convince.

Dostoevsky and Tolstoy represented diametrically opposed and antagonistic styles in nineteenth-century Russian literature, which, at the time, were discussed in terms of being the epic and lyrical, objective and subjective, descriptive and psychological. The Soviets now believe, and to some extent justifiably, that the clash between them was a literary reflection of the struggle for supremacy between the entrenched forces of Russia's hereditary aristocracy and the rising forces of a new and vigorous intellectual aristocracy of men of odd backgrounds, the *raznochintsy*. Form was inextricably intertwined with content in this intensely ideological conflict. Many Soviet scholars have examined Dostoevsky's novels in the same harsh political spirit, and in focusing on only certain aspects of his work they have exaggerated their importance. Dostoevsky charged Tolstoy with ideological bias, but the same charge can be made against him.

Psychological alienation is an important theme today. In this sense we can point to the pioneering work done by the Russian organicists in investigating this condition of modern man long before it became generally recognized. They met the positivism of the civic critics head on, and their criticism of the aesthetic movement was directed at the moral obtuseness and its falsity to a full reality. Grigor'ev, Strakhov, and Dostoevsky were all profoundly hostile to everything that grows out of a nakedly logical process, and they believed in the extralogical plenitude of immediate awareness. Their view of the world and of man presupposes an inclusiveness of art, forbids a partial view of reality, and implies an artist speak-

ing as a whole man. Here, of course, morality enters into the organic scheme and literary standards, and the religious theme did serve as an effective vehicle for their statement. For just as in life one responds at various levels, ranging from animal to spiritual, so art, in their view, must reach hierarchically toward a religious peak. And at the summit of their preferences is the identification with Christ achieved through recognition of the whole man. The renewal of modern man, they felt, was to be based in Christianity, because any renewal not based in the best moral tradition of the past is ephemeral; and the dominant that grows from historical roots acts like a living being within the ego-bound modern man.

But modern man's struggle with his own nature, which was for Tolstoy a choice between right and wrong, was not so simple for the organicists. The conflict between a weakened conscience and increased self-consciousness signified, in their view, an alarming confrontation between the abstract inner man and the concrete outer man, his outward expression as an individual. Indeed, the split between the modern conscious ego and the archaic and unconscious self denotes rejection of the inner self by the outer self. For the organicists this is the essence of nihilism: a sinister attempt by reason, which is identified with ego-consciousness, to achieve autonomy by overwhelming the inner moral man. The outcome would be a peculiarly lucid (Luciferian) state in which a hypocritical ego knowingly usurps the place of a weakened conscience that looked back on an earlier "mythical" time when the ego still felt absolutely dependent on a higher and mightier nonego. The subsequent disappearance of guilt and strengthening of criticism would be felt as progress, enlightenment, indeed as redemption, although a one-sided and limited being has replaced the whole man. The organicists felt that the decay of the conscious dominant would be followed by an irruption of moral chaos on the individual. The nihilist's ego is first inflated and then reduced to the "ugliest man," a clever "gorilla" who, once he has had an education, begins to think of himself as a superman. This theme is frequent in the writings of the Russian organicists. It is elaborated by Dostoevsky in conversations between nihilists. In *The Possessed* Kirilov and Stavrogin argue about the difference between God-man (inner man) and Man-god (outer man), in connection with the evolution of man from ape, and his further development from man to god in Kirilov's view, but back to ape in Stavrogin's view. The issue is

dramatized in Kirilov's suicide: before shooting himself he "goes ape" and bites the finger of another nihilist, Peter Verkhovensky. Conversations of this kind also occur between Stavrogin and Verkhovensky, whom Stavrogin calls "his ape" (the reference is, of course, an organic renewal of the medieval idea that the devil is the ape of God). Verkhovensky is intellectually superior to his father, Stepan, who is handicapped by moral considerations. A similar notion can be found in W. H. Auden's modern semidrama *The Sea and the Mirror*, which is an updated version of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. In Auden's work Caliban has achieved status; he is a modern intellectual who surpasses Prospero in both insight and sophistication. A useful comparison may be drawn from the treatment of this important theme in different literary traditions.

The Russian organicists were interested in a phenomenon that also interests modern students of human nature (see above, pp. 12–13) who see significant changes in modern man's moral attitudes, apparently induced by changes in patterns of thought. The organicists saw the irreligiosity of modern man as the result of a change from symbolic to logical thinking, which makes him believe only in a limited physical existence in time and, in turn, induces him to pursue social progress and the limits of space. Traditional man, on the other hand, believes in an unlimited metaphysical existence, abhors change, is not interested in social progress, and pursues moral progress and the limits of time (eschatology). This pattern changes with advances in civilization, when interest in eschatology slowly fades and is replaced by an interest in scientific goals. One may surmise, then, that morality is the illogical product of traditional (symbolic) thinking, and immorality the fruit of progressive (logical) thought. The Russian organicists applied this idea to the puzzle of the so-called criminal mind. Grigor'ev summed it up in the notion of bourgeois mentality as "moral philistinism" (*moral'noe lakeistvo*), which Dostoevsky immortalized in the character of the "lackey" Smerdiakov (*The Brothers Karamazov*), who, after he became proficient in logic, concluded that there can be no God and, if there is no God, "all is permitted" (*vsë pozvoleno*).

Anyone brought up on the conventions of modern criticism invariably reads the organic critics with a sense of discomfort. Their content is massively moral and dogmatically expressed. Furthermore, our ingrained empirical bias is better attuned to the scientism of formal criticism, which attempts to draw precise con-

clusions. But the organic critics dared do what others were not able to do: liberate criticism from procedural limitations. Their critiques have a kind of historical and critical multiple import that is always unfinished. Therefore the differences in their practices from what we consider to be good criticism today arise from no clumsiness on their part, nor from a primitive quality in their writing, but from different assumptions about reality.

THE AESTHETIC CRITICS

Many critics have complained that Tolstoy's works were structurally ambiguous, but none more than the aesthetic critics, as they were called, who were interested in literary works primarily as works of art. They were understandably dismayed by Tolstoy's radical approach to questions of form, and displayed a classicist's intolerance of the interference with traditional genres that they found in his works. They objected to Tolstoy's experimental stories as unfinished episodic sketches. Some aesthetic critics complained that Tolstoy was burdening the reader, quite unnecessarily, with his own problems in experimenting with form. Many compared Tolstoy with Pushkin, Gogol, and Turgenev, all of whom, they maintained, were more able to deal with form. Several of these critics seriously questioned the feasibility of the unwieldy format of *War and Peace*, which seemed too loosely assembled. The multiplanar construction had forced the plot into a glacial pace of development and made the novel extremely difficult to analyze. Reviewers protested Tolstoy's introducing characters without acquainting the reader with their previous history. Some of them praised the absence, and others objected to the presence, of ideological bias in Tolstoy's work. Almost to a man, the aesthetic critics complained about excesses in Tolstoy's technique of intensive analysis, which many thought to be an intolerable, unnecessary intrusion into the private lives of his characters. All this did not, however, prevent the

critics from praising highly the artistic merits of Tolstoy's works. In general, they admired the simplicity and authenticity of his style, and they found his handling of war scenes particulary effective. Representative of their position is the careful review of Tolstoy's early works by the writer-critic A. V. Druzhinin (1824–64), a moderate liberal and a follower of Sainte-Beuve, who disliked Tolstoy's analysis but liked his impartiality toward his characters, his freedom from topical issues, the unusual and original features of his work, and his steady pursuit of artistic excellence. Impulsively Druzhinin declared Tolstoy, along with Turgenev and Pisemsky, to be the newest representatives of pure art,[1] thereby galling his ideological opponent Chernyshevsky. In another instance, the highly respected writer-critic V. P. Botkin (1811–69) praised *The Cossacks* as a most articulate work of verbal art, but at the same time criticized Tolstoy for an obvious lack of artistic control (*nevyderzhannost'*) and a tendency to promote the dated ideas of J. J. Rousseau, for which the main character Olenin became something of a mouthpiece (*nezhiznennyi*).[2] The critic P. V. Annenkov (1812–87), who held liberal ideas of both the Westernizing and Slavophile sorts, also objected to undue tendentiousness in Tolstoy's works. He even compared Tolstoy to the satirist N. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826–89), saying that both had the tendency to saturate their works with their own obsessive ideas.[3] The key to Tolstoy's works and the people in them was the search for authenticity, naturalness, and truth, Annenkov said, a search that sometimes became frenetic. In *The Cossacks* not only Olenin but everybody—Marianka, Luke, Daddy Eroshka, and even the wild pigs—searched for eternal verities alongside him. However, unlike Botkin, Annenkov found Olenin as a character well conceived and executed.[4] He compared Olenin to Pushkin's Eugene Onegin as a superfluous man. He even sought to establish similarities between Goncharov's Il'ia Oblomov *(Oblomov)* and Pierre Bezukhov of *War and Peace,* who had indolence and obesity in common. Otherwise Annenkov admitted that he was at a loss to assess this formidable new piece of Russian literature.[5] He found it too rich in content and too diffuse in form and manner to permit any reliable immediate judgment.

Although most of the aesthetes were eager to praise Tolstoy's articulate art, each added some complaint to temper his praise, so as to indicate that there was something about it one could not quite accept and be comfortable with. The columnist E. Edelson (1824–

68) described Tolstoy's narrative as unaffected, truthful, charming, and lively, but found the manner of narrative disjointed (*bessviaznaia*) and whimsical (*prichudlivaia*). He admired, however, Tolstoy's apparent ability to depict and instantly characterize "virtually anybody."[6] S. S. Dudyshkin (1820–68), an aesthete with Slavophile leanings, thought that Tolstoy was "testing the strength of character" of his protagonists by putting them in dangerous situations (the war stories). He deplored the "poor structure" of Tolstoy's stories, but praised their realism.[7] The writer-critic N. D. Akhsharumov (1819–93), prolific author of lightweight adventure stories, drew some conclusions from a comparison of Tolstoy's narrative manner with that of Sir Walter Scott. He found the form of Tolstoy's works puzzling and the combination of artistic and philosophical passages disagreeable. And he complained that some of Tolstoy's characters were less than thoroughly alive.[8] The poet-impressionist and critic S. A. Andreevsky (1847–1919) claimed that Tolstoy's art was just too tendentious. In *The Kreutzer-Sonata*, he pointed out, Tolstoy "confidently demanded" that mankind be allowed to die out. Andreevsky found the ceaseless soul-searching of Tolstoyan characters tiresome and overdone, their search for truth confusing and depressing. He also complained about excessive naturalism and undue exposure of the inner lives of characters, whom Tolstoy was endowing with "luminous insides" (*svetiashchiesia vnutrennosti*). Andreevsky thought it was altogether unneccessary for Tolstoy to dwell on the inner lives of animals. Moreover, Andreevsky remonstrated that Tolstoy was a thoroughly unpoetic writer; he refused to create ideal female characters in the manner of Pushkin and Turgenev, and his Natasha Rostov and Kitty Shcherbatsky were mere females.[9] The critic and popular novelist Vsevolod S. Solov'ev (1849–1903) made some rather interesting comments about the role of repetitions in Tolstoy's style, but explained his ideas only briefly. He found serious fault with persistent patterns of repetitions, the effect of which, he said, was to trivialize and overstress the effect of familiarity. Besides, he said, Tolstoy was guilty of repeating "bits of business"—descriptive detail and incidents he had used in his previous works—to create an image or illustrate a point. As a result, the reader could not help but feel that he had read it all somewhere before. Another, and perhaps even more pernicious, effect he found was that of banality, particularly in *Anna Karenina*, whose subject and often details were quite trivial

to begin with. Nonetheless, Solov'ev rated *Anna Karenina* as a tremendous artistic achievement. Tolstoy's artistic ability was so great that he was able to endow even a trivial incident with a deeper meaning; a sensitive reader could enjoy his art regardless of the banality of its subject.[10]

Well-known poets and writers, too, tried their hand at writing critiques of Tolstoy's work. The poet Ia. P. Polonsky (1819–98) was commissioned by Dostoevsky to write a casual critique of *The Cossacks*.[11] Polonsky praised Tolstoy's art but objected to his extensive analysis, episodic structure, and saturation of the narrative with detail. He surmised that Tolstoy was unable to produce a protagonist with a strong character, a problem he shared with Turgenev. Polonsky rated Olenin with Onegin as an obsolete type. The young generation, he said, no longer looked up to such Byronic characters as models of behavior; they wanted men of action, men of strong will. The well-known poet A. A. Fet [Shenshin] (1820–92) wrote, but did not publish, an essay on *Anna Karenina*.[12] Apparently, it was written in defense of Tolstoy's moral and artistic position in the controversy with the editor of the *Russian Messenger*, M. N. Katkov (1818–87), a conservative Russian nationalist and Slavophile, about the refusal of the latter to publish the final (eighth) part of *Anna Karenina* without cutting out certain passages he considered unpatriotic. Tolstoy finally resolved the conflict by publishing the eighth part of the novel as a separate publication. Apart from that unpublished essay, Fet's casual comments about Tolstoy's work in personal letters agree with those of Turgenev. Fet praised *The Cossacks* as an artistic masterpiece but condemned "Polikushka," a short story that appeared at the same time (1862), as a sordid piece of fiction on a lowly subject. The student of national lore N. S. Leskov (1831–95), a writer who was a Russian nationalist as well as a proponent of the "art for art's sake" doctrine and had long admired Tolstoy, wrote a series of short articles in the influential daily the *Stock Exchange News*,[13] where he defended Tolstoy's positions against spirited assaults by retired generals who accused Tolstoy of distorting historical facts in *War and Peace*. Leskov maintained that Tolstoy was never a naturalist or historian, not even a realist in the strict sense of the word, but the poet of a higher spiritual reality, knowledge of which enabled him to see into the past and future. Much later Leskov wrote a polemic analysis of "The Death of Ivan Ilych" where, aside from a few

vicious jabs at Dostoevsky as a fashionable prophet and a popular saint, he tried to interpret the illness and death of Ivan Ilych as a record of the man's gradual rise or "resurrection" to this state of higher consciousness.[14] In *War and Peace*, Leskov claimed, Prince Andrei Bolkonsky underwent essentially the same process of gradual awakening from the "sleep" of ordinary life into another existence, a higher spiritual state. According to Leskov, this subject was crucial to Tolstoy's religious and philosophical views and was discussed and reiterated in all of his artistic works. Another writer of some renown, Mark Landau (1889–1957), who wrote popular historic fiction under the anagrammatic pseudonym Aldanov, attempted a lengthy (unfinished) comparative study of the aesthetic systems of Tolstoy and his follower and admirer, the French writer Romain Rolland. In this impressionistic study, Aldanov treated Tolstoy and his art as a mysterious phenomenon and tried to explain its controversial nature as a result of tensions built up by the excessive moral demands Tolstoy always made upon himself.[15]

Writer-critics of Tolstoy thus tended to be speculative and were quite often less than certain of their ground. By and large, critics interested in the aesthetic nature of literature scrutinized most of all the form of Tolstoy's works. They questioned the validity of Tolstoy's theories, complained about his tendency to experiment with form and content, and criticized his introduction of novel and controversial ideas in both areas. Aesthetic critics generally thought of such experimentation as extraneous or harmful to the artistic purpose. They found the essential artistry in Tolstoy's works to be perfect and merely spoiled by such experimentation. A variant of this complaint was voiced by the organic writer-critic Dostoevsky (see chap. 3), who also believed Tolstoy's ideas and moral ideals to be worthless; he was a great admirer of Tolstoy's art so long as it remained pure, i.e., uncontaminated by Tolstoy's controversial ideas. An outstanding example of this attitude among the aesthetic critics is the writer Turgenev, who was a great admirer of Tolstoy, yet extremely intolerant of Tolstoy's ideas. Turgenev's fiction, somewhat uncharacteristically, reflects his involvement with current social issues. His controversial novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862) deals with the ideology of Russian nihilists and current problems of the generation gap. His other novels were written around some current issue, so that all his novels were to a great degree topical and controversial. In this sense he was a writer who was invariably

embroiled in current issues.[16] But as a literary critic he stood aloof from these. His point of view is therefore quite representative of the aesthetic point of view.

TURGENEV

The novelist Ivan S. Turgenev (1818–83) left a number of important critical judgments of Tolstoy and his work. The most valuable appear in Turgenev's correspondence, which was the genre most congenial to him as a critic, as the Soviet scholar L. N. Nazarova has pointed out.[17] Turgenev's letters contain succinct critical coments on *Childhood, Boyhood, Youth*, the Sebastopol stories, "Albert," "Lucerne," "A Landowner's Morning," *Family Happiness*, "Polikushka," and *The Cossacks*; they mention *Anna Karenina* and *My Confession* briefly, in disapprobation; they provide, most of all, a commentary on *War and Peace*. The critiques of Tolstoy's work that Turgenev wrote for publication are less subjective, less specific, and far less significant. Written much later, they were usually meant to introduce translations of Tolstoy's works to the European reader.[18] They are significant primarily because they provide a concise assessment of Tolstoy as a writer and assign *War and Peace* its proper place in world literature.

Turgenev rarely censured a fellow writer in print.[19] Brilliant and erudite, he had the potential of becoming a first-rate critic,[20] but preferred to avoid the unpleasantness and petty polemics of Russian journalism. Instead he thought of himself as a propagandist of Russian culture abroad; for years he was the leading exponent of Russian talent in Western Europe.[21] In his introductions of Russian artists and writers he stressed what they had in common with their European counterparts, providing a basis for appreciation of their uniquely Russian characteristics. I shall treat Turgenev as a commentator on Tolstoy chronologically but in two parts: (1) as a self-appointed tutor, and (2) as a critic of Tolstoy.

Turgenev as Tutor to Tolstoy the Man

Turgenev assumed considerable responsibility for the destiny of Russian literature. He saw himself as the leading figure of its transitional period[22] and apparently felt that it was his special privilege to groom a successor. His letters indicate that he recognized Tolstoy's potential early. "This is a dependable talent," he wrote to Nekrasov on 28 October 1852, not long after Tolstoy's first story, *Childhood*,

came out. "This is a first-rate talent," he said to E. Ia. Kolbasin in a letter of 29 October 1854; "I firmly hope that he will surprise us all yet. This man will go far, and leave behind a deep trace," he wrote to Polonsky on 17 February 1857.

Turgenev, indeed, slated Tolstoy for the leading role in the next period of Russian literature. "Poetic and rich natures like Tolstoy," he wrote to V. P. Botkin on 3 January 1857, "will express fully and clearly what I only hinted about." His letter of 1 November 1854 to Dr. I. F. Minitsky represents Turgenev's earnest conviction quite well. The letter refers to a relatively well known incident in 1845 when the famous Belinsky administered a stern rebuke to Nekrasov for his rash and precipitate choice of Dostoevsky (whom Turgenev disliked) as a spiritual successsor to Gogol. "You will find there," Turgenev wrote, "a new story by the author of *Childhood*, Tolstoy, next to whom all our attempts look like just so much nonsense. There he is, at long last, the real successor to Gogol, and one who does not resemble Gogol in the least, which is, of course, just as it should be." In this last remark Turgenev apparently referred to the same factual anecdote: Nekrasov's acclaim of "a new Gogol" was based on Dostoevsky's first novelette, *Poor Folk*, which bears a strong resemblance to Gogol's novelette *The Overcoat* and is, in some ways, a direct parody of that brilliant and famous story. Compared to it, Tolstoy's early work, *Childhood*, was much more original. It bore no resemblance to anything Gogol had ever written—a fact that, to Turgenev, was evidence of Tolstoy's originality and independence as a writer and made him much more fit to become the leading Russian writer of the future.

Turgenev's subsequent friction with Tolstoy was perhaps indirectly a result of his efforts to make Tolstoy behave in accord with the commission bestowed upon him by his older colleague. Worried about the chronic dearth of promising talents,[23] Turgenev became inordinately concerned about Tolstoy's well-being. "Your sister," he wrote to Tolstoy on 3 October 1855,

> must have told you what a high opinion I have of your talent and how much I expect of you—lately I have been thinking about you especially often. I shudder to think where you are right now. Although in a way I am glad that you are getting all those new firsthand impressions and experiences, there is a limit to everything, and one must not tempt fate—she is glad enough as it is to harm us at every step. It would be so good if you could get away from the

> Crimea—you have proved enough that you are not a coward, and a military career is really not for you. Your destiny is to be a writer, an artist of the thought and word, I dare speak to you like this because in your last letter which I received today you hint at the possibility of a leave—and on top of that I simply love Russian literature too much not to want you to be outside the range of all kinds of stupid and undiscriminating bullets. If you really could come, at least for a time, to the Tula province [the region of Tolstoy's residence, not far from Turgenev's]—I would make it a special point to come here from Saint Petersburg to get acquainted with you personally. I know this cannot be a very great inducement to you but, really—for yourself, for literature—do come. I repeat once again—your weapon is the pen, not the sword, and the Muses not only do not tolerate vanity but they are jealous mistresses. . . . I have so much to tell you about yourself, about your work.

Thus Turgenev began to press for a close friendship, even at one time (1854–56) cultivating a sentimental attachment for Tolstoy's married sister; and he found Tolstoy personally deficient. Turgenev was not impressed with Tolstoy's intelligence. He thought Tolstoy mentally disorganized. "I have always suspected you of muddle-headedness (if you will forgive the expression)," he wrote to Tolstoy on 25 September 1856. Turgenev thought that Tolstoy's education was grossly inadequate, and looked upon Tolstoy as a self-willed and eccentric boor. "He is a berserk troglodyte . . . ," Turgenev wrote to Tolstoy's sister Mary and her husband on 20 December 1855, "and has committed many atrocities since his arrival here." "I almost quarreled with Tolstoy for good," he wrote to Botkin on 8 February 1856, "because of what he dared say about Georges Sand. . . . He said so many stupid and banal things that they cannot even be recounted. . . . He went really far this time, . . . outraged everybody and presented himself in a most unfavorable light."

Yet Turgenev was acutely aware that this impossible fellow, this "savage," was possessed of a unique and wondrous earthy talent.[24] So, it was imperative to civilize him. "Tolstoy's essay about Sebastopol is a miracle!" he gushed in a letter to I. I. Panaev of 10 July 1855. "Whenever he touches the ground," he explained in a letter to P. V. Annenkov on 25 April 1868, "he, like Antaeus, regains all his powers." Turgenev wanted to see this talent used efficiently, uncomplicated by Tolstoy's tendencies to esoteric theorizing. He praised Tolstoy so as to bolster his creative urge, mocked his reluctance to commit himself to a full-time literary career, egged him on

to increased productivity,[25] and jealously guarded him against various "savage" influences. "I see that you have become lately very close friends with Druzhinin and are under his influence," he wrote tartly to Tolstoy on 20 December 1856. "I fear lest Slavophilism, into whose hands he seems to have fallen, should spoil his beautiful and poetic talent, depriving him of independence of outlook," he wrote to Borisov on 27 March 1870, "as it has already spoiled Kokhanovskaia and others. The artist who loses his capacity to see black and white—left and right—already stands at the brink of destruction." And on 7 December 1857 he wrote the following admonition to Tolstoy:

> I most fervently hope that the current civic trend in literature will leave you unaffected. . . . Follow your own path—and write, but of course no moral and political sermons like "Lucerne." Botkin has praised to me very highly the beginning of your novel about the Caucasus. You write that you are very glad not to have followed my advice and become only a writer of fiction. I do not want to argue the point—perhaps you are right. Only I, sinful man that I am and prone to error, no matter how hard I rack my brains over it, for the life of me I cannot imagine what else it is that you might be if not a fiction writer: an army officer, perhaps? a landed gentleman? a philosopher? the founder of a new religion? a government official? a businessman?—be so good as to help me out of my difficulty . . .
>
> I am joking, of course, but seriously—I really would so much like to see you go ahead full speed at last, with all sails set.

Turgenev, who thought of Tolstoy as a relatively pure product of savage ignorance and Muscovite bigotry, tried to prevent Tolstoy from injecting any messages of homespun philosophy in his work (he called it *mudrit'*—playing the wise man), in other words, from behaving like a prophet, until Tolstoy had improved his education and become civilized. Turgenev was eager to help with advice; but he resented Tolstoy's attempts to deviate from what he thought was the path for Tolstoy to follow. Turgenev's letters sound a stubborn refrain that Tolstoy should calm down, settle down, establish his mental bearings. "If you won't stray from the road—(and, apparently, there is no reason to assume that)—you will go very far," he wrote to Tolstoy on 28 November 1856. "I wish you health, an active life—and freedom, spiritual freedom." "When you calm down at last, when the ferment in you will quiet down . . ." he wrote on 25 September 1856, "it might bring you that mentally settled attitude which you need so badly," he continued on 20 December

1856. "There is obviously some change going on in you," he went on, on 15 January 1857, "—and a very good change at that (forgive me, please, if I seem to be patting you on the head but I am a full ten years older than you and, besides, beginning to feel more and more like an old tutor and a blabbermouth); you are growing calmer, more lucid and, what is perhaps most important, you are freeing yourself from your own views and prejudices. . . . May God let it come to pass that your outlook should widen every day." "I see from his letters," Turgenev confided to Druzhinin a few days later on 25 January 1857, "that he is undergoing a most beneficial change, and rejoice in it 'like an old nanny.'" These letters indicate a curious fact: for all his thoroughly enlightened European background and education,Turgenev could not resist assuming the role of spiritual leader any more than his colleagues Chernyshevsky, a radical, and Dostoevsky, a Slavophile, could. He could not forgo tutoring a promising younger writer in the intricacies of leading the Russian people toward his own views. Turgenev's efforts to influence Tolstoy continued to the end of Turgenev's life when, on his deathbed, he fired at Tolstoy his famous last letter with the ambiguous and memorable phrase that caught the fancy of critics,[26] urging Tolstoy to come down to earth and return once again to writing about the Russian land.

Turgenev as Critic of Tolstoy the Artist

From the beginning Turgenev assumed that Tolstoy's work suffered from a variety of savage features such as an extravagant use of descriptive detail. "I liked very much Tolstoy's facile and brisk little tale 'The Raid,'" he wrote to Annenkov on 21 April 1853, "if only one could throw out two or three pages of excessive descriptions of nature." Turgenev believed that Tolstoy showed great skill in drawing characters, and his descriptions indicated an astonishing power of talent; but the material was undigested and much of it was unnecessary. "After you left," he wrote to Fet on 25 January 1864, "I sat down to read Tolstoy's 'Polikushka' and was amazed at the sheer power of this truly great talent. Only far too much material is wasted, and it really wasn't necessary to drown the little boy. The story is just too gruesome this way. But there are pages that are truly astonishing! Chills wander up and down the spine, right through to the backbone, and ours, as you and I know, is pretty thick-skinned and coarse. A master, a real master!" However,

Turgenev objected more vigorously to the intruding bias against civilization. Such bias had spoiled the short story "Lucerne" and adversely affected the fragment "A Landowner's Morning." This is what Turgenev said about it in his letter of 25 January 1857 to the writer-critic Druzhinin:

> I have read his [Tolstoy's] "Landowner's Morning," which I liked extraordinarily well because of its sincerity and almost complete lack of bias; I say "almost" because in the way he set himself his task there lies buried (perhaps unbeknownst to himself) a certain prejudice. The principal moral impression from the story (and I am not speaking of the artistic one) is the feeling that so long as serfdom exists, there can be no real meeting of the two sides no matter how unselfish or honest the attempt may be—and this impression is good and true; but there is another one, an outrunner,—namely that, on the whole, to enlighten the peasant, to improve his lot leads nowhere—and this impression leaves an unpleasant aftertaste. But the skill in language, narrative, characterization is great.

Turgenev believed that Tolstoy was determined to resist civilization at every step. He thought that Tolstoy's short story "Three Deaths" was an attempt to present civilization as a corrupting and unnecessary influence. He conveyed this impression to Tolstoy. "To tell you what I think," he wrote on 11 February 1859, "'Three Deaths' has made here, on the whole, a favorable impression—but people find the ending odd, don't quite understand its connection to the preceding deaths, and those who do, don't like it." Turgenev felt that "Albert" and *The Cossacks* were spoiled by a psychological predisposition for showing the effects of civilization in excessive self-analysis.[27] "I was delighted by *The Cossacks*," he wrote to Fet on 7 April 1863, "and so was Botkin. Only the character of Olenin spoils the splendid overall impression. To juxtapose civilization and the primeval untouched nature there was no need to bring out again this self-absorbed, tiresome, morbid creature. Why is it that Tolstoy will not get rid of this persistent nightmare of his!"

The Cossacks, which, as Gershenzon has pointed out, came into being under the influence of Turgenev's own *Sportsman's Sketches*,[28] was Tolstoy's only major work to meet Turgenev's standards as a work of literature with correct proportions of poetic and realistic elements. Turgenev thoroughly approved of its overall tenor. "A few days ago," he wrote on 17 June 1864 to Borisov, "I reread Tolstoy's novel *The Cossacks* and was again transported with delight. This is indeed an astonishing piece that has immense power."

"Mme Viardot and I are reading Tolstoy's *The Cossacks*," he wrote again to Borisov on 21 March 1866, "and I am enjoying myself to excess: what genuine poetry and beauty!" He never changed his opinion of the novel as a near-perfect work of literary art. If anything, with time, his opinion of *The Cossacks* tended to improve. Eventually, he came to regard it as Tolstoy's masterpiece. *"The more I reread this novelette,"* he wrote on 16 March 1874 to Fet, *"the more I become convinced that it is the chef d'oeuvre of Tolstoy, as well as of the entire Russian narrative fiction."* Neither *War and Peace* nor *Anna Karenina* fared nearly so well in Turgenev's estimation.

Turgenev's immediate condemnation of the early parts of *War and Peace* reflected the standards by which he judged a literary work. At first he found scarcely a redeeming feature in the book and railed bitterly about its "glaring faults." "I managed to read," he wrote to Borisov on 28 March 1865,

> the beginning of Tolstoy's novel [*War and Peace*]. To my genuine dismay I must confess that this novel strikes me as being positively bad, boring, and unsuccessful. Tolstoy left his bailiwick and all his shortcomings are immediately exposed. . . . How meager is all this on the broad canvas of a historical novel! And he puts this wretched product above *The Cossacks*! So much the worse for him if he really means it. And how cold it all is and dry—how obvious the author's lack of imagination and spontaneity—how tiresome the attempts to show off and impress the reader with feats of sheer memory for petty, incidental, and unnecessary things. . . . Oh, no, this is really too much; this is the way to fall, even with his talent. This is very painful to me, and I should like to be mistaken.

Turgenev's early impression of *War and Peace*, then, was that it was the product of a savage mind: a good memory for trivia, a pedestrian imagination, and morbid preoccupation with naturalistic detail. Later Turgenev modified his stand to allow some praise for the descriptions of nature and people in *War and Peace*, but he continued to disapprove of its history and psychology. As early as 26 February 1868 he admitted to Annenkov that he thought there were "things in the novel that no one in the whole of Europe could have written except Tolstoy, and which have aroused in me the chills and fevers of ecstasy." "The death of the old prince," he continued on 25 April 1868, "Alpatych, the uprising in the village, all this is astonishing." "Tolstoy's novel," he wrote 6 March 1868 to Polonsky, "is a marvelous thing: but the weakest thing about it is precisely

what the public is so excited about: the historical side and psychology. His history is a trick, he flabbergasts with fine detail; his psychology is nothing but a whimsical, monotonous fuss about the same emotions over and over again. But everything about the daily life, the descriptive part, the military scenes—all that is first-rate stuff."

For Turgenev, Tolstoy was not only an archaic thinker but an anti-intellectual, who tried to lock his readers into a rigid formulaic state of mind by means of repetitive indoctrination. He was unusually disturbed by Tolstoy's attempts to squeeze human behavior into a formula. If this happens, he contended, man will lose his intellect and revert to an animal state. He complained about Tolstoy's system, according to which intelligent, educated women were made out to be shrews and hypocrites, good women were fools, and decent people were invariably eccentric, boorish, or simpleminded. "It was disconcerting to me," he lamented to Borisov on 27 March 1870, "to see the reflection of *the system* even in the images Tolstoy draws. Why is it that all his good women are not just plain females—but fools? And why does he try so hard to convince the reader that if a woman is intelligent and cultured, she must also be a phrasemonger and a liar? . . . And why is it that every one of his decent people, too, is some sort of blockhead, and slightly touched in the head?" Tolstoy's heroines, especially Natasha Rostov, did not appeal to Turgenev. "And what sort of young ladies are they!" he exclaimed in a letter to Borisov of 28 March 1865, "every one of them some sort of scrofulous, affected brat." "Natasha," he confided to Annenkov on 25 April 1868, "seems to come out pretty weak, and tends toward the type of (excusez du mot) shitty [*zasrannykh*] little girls so beloved by Tolstoy." Moreover, Turgenev complained that Tolstoy's psychological method was just a bag of tricks. Details that were later to be praised by Merezhkovsky were described by Turgenev as capricious. Tolstoy's psychology, he said, was old and tiresome. "And how tortuous," he complained to Annenkov on 26 February 1868, "are those deliberate, stubborn repetitions of one and the same feature—the fluff on the upper lip of Princess Bolkonsky . . . trivial details, capriciously selected by the author and raised to salient characteristics. In a way this is charlatanry!" On 10 March 1868 he remonstrated to Borisov that "on the other hand there is all that

profusion of the same old psychological fuss ('what am I thinking? What are they thinking of me? Do I like it or do I hate it? etc.') that seems to be a positive monomania of Tolstoy's."

Apparently Turgenev made no meaningful distinction between the psychological methods of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, both of which he considered physiological. They were associated in his mind with filth and mental onanism. "The first part of *Crime and Punishment,*" he wrote to Fet on 6 April 1866, "is excellent; the second part smells again of fetid self-poking. The second part of *The Year 1805* [*War and Peace*] is also weak: all those trivial little details, cleverly put together." "All those little things," Turgenev fretted to Borisov on 28 March 1865, "cleverly noticed and pretentiously presented, little psychological observations that, under the pretext of 'truth' he plucks out from under the armpits and other dark places of his protagonists." Turgenev linked the technique to Dostoevsky's, who had inundated *Crime and Punishment* with filth and saturated it with the foul smells of a hospital cloaca. "In the second part of *Crime and Punishment,*" Turgenev wrote to Annenkov on 6 April 1866, "the dam burst that you spoke about, a lot of stuff got spilled, and the air is once more filled with those pungent sour and fetid smells of the hospital atmosphere. Neither did I like the newest installment of Tolstoy's *The Year 1805*. A great deal of trivia, and a kind of whimsical manneredness in the presentation of individual features—and then of course there are those perennial repetitions over and over again of that same old inner fuss: what am I, a coward or not a coward? etc. A strange historical novel!" Turgenev was convinced that Tolstoy's fondness for familiar and concrete features was the morbid fascination of a savage with trivial vacillations of his own psyche and contained the only psychology Tolstoy knew or cared to know. "It's that old trick of his," Turgenev complained to Annenkov on 26 February 1868, "to convey oscillations, vibrations of one and the same feeling or position, all those things that he so pitilessly stuffs into the mouths and consciousnesses of every one of his heroes. . . . One is so thoroughly fed up with all those quasi-fine reflexias and reflections and observations upon one's own feelings! It is as though Tolstoy didn't know of any other psychology, or else would deliberately ignore it." As a result, Turgenev felt, Tolstoy's characters failed to develop properly. They merely moved forward every once in a while in little jumps. "About Tolstoy's so-called psychology," Turgenev

went on, "one could also be moved to say a thing or two: there is no real development in any of his characters (which, by the way, you noticed extremely well)." "There is no real development of characters," he repeated himself in a letter to Borisov of 10 March 1868; "they just advance every once in a while in little leaps."

Limited by his view of Tolstoy as a savage, Turgenev failed to see any merit or poetic substance in his historical descriptions. He suspected skulduggery—schemes to hide ignorance by pulling the wool over the eyes of civilized readers. He dismissed the historical passages of *War and Peace* as cheap tricks and false pretentions, designed to fool a gullible public, something he himself had tried to depict in his novels as a deplorable habit of ignorant but pretentious Russians when trying to hold their own among civilized peoples. "The historical supplement with which the readers are so delighted," he claimed on 26 February 1868 in a letter to Annenkov, "is a puppet show and charlatanry. Like Voroshilov in *Smoke*, who shows off by citing 'the latest word of science' on a given subject (without having any idea about the first or second—something which, by the way, the conscientious Germans would never even imagine), so does Tolstoy flabbergast the reader with the tip of the shoe of Alexander I, the laughter of Speransky, compelling one to think that he must know *all* about those things if he even knows such details—but these details are all he knows. A trick, that is all, but the public fell for it." In Turgenev's opinion, genuine historical background had failed to materialize in those descriptions. Like any savage, Tolstoy was unable to think in perspective. "How is it that Tolstoy still has not wearied of all those interminable discussions about whether 'I am a coward or not'—all that battle pathology?" Turgenev wanted to know in a letter to Fet on 6 April 1866, "Where are the features of the epoch, the historical colors? The figure of Denisov is briskly drawn—and it would have been fine as a piece of embroidery on a background—but where is the background?"

Similarly, Turgenev could brook no philosophizing from Tolstoy. He was extremely intolerant of Tolstoy's attempts to flavor his work with moral or philosophical message. Turgenev regarded both not only as of doubtful value but also as offensive, like a "bad smell" that had contaminated Tolstoy's otherwise artistically superb book. He regarded Tolstoy's teachings as harmful nonsense concocted by an ignoramus, a product of childish gall and rank prej-

udice that deprived Tolstoy of his intellectual and artistic objectivity.[29] "You could not possibly have a higher opinion of him than I," he wrote to Fet on 28 August 1871, ". . . if only to a talent like this were added an educated and serene intellect, i.e., a mind grown wise with experience—there would be no limit to what one might expect from him! I firmly believe that we will yet live to see the moment when he will be the first to laugh good-humoredly at the quasi-philosophical nonsense that he infused like a bad smell into his truly great novel." "It is very bad," Turgenev said in his 25 April 1868 letter to Annenkov, "when a self-educated man, and especially one with Tolstoy's predilections, takes to philosophizing. He will invariably straddle some stick, dream up a monolithic system that, apparently, resolves everything very neatly, such as, for example, historical fatalism, and off he goes on a binge, scribbling away!" "I am in the process of reading the fifth part of *War and Peace*," Turgenev wrote to Borisov on 5 June 1869, "and am by turns vexed and delighted. How depressing it is to see such a great talent handicapped by a lack of free outlook, genuine artistic freedom." Turgenev thought of Tolstoy's forays into philosophy as symptoms of a disease,[30] an artistic deformity, an intellectual rampage, or a nonsensical paradox. "I received the fourth volume of Tolstoy," he wrote to Annenkov on 25 April 1868. "Much of it is beautiful, but there is also much that is ugly and deformed." "I greatly fear," he wrote to Borisov on 20 April 1868, "that he has again taken a plunge into philosophy and, as it always happens to him then, will take the bit between his teeth and go off like a crazy runaway horse, hitting and kicking indiscriminately." "Judging by the latest news that is coming in," he wrote again to Borisov on 24 March 1869, "our eccentric genius is still off and running with the bit between his teeth. How can anyone, out of sheer resentment of philosophy and phrases, get so hung up in philosophy and phrase himself! What is as obvious to every peasant as the usefulness of bread—namely, the usefulness of the mind, the reason—that, you see, must be eradicated! What awful nonsense! Why, oh, why did such stuff and nonsense have to enter the head of the *most gifted writer* in all of Europe today. And yet I relish in advance all those delightful tidbits with which this fifth volume is likely to be filled." Turgenev found himself unable to reconcile these two aspects of Tolstoy's work. He deplored the wasted opportunities for Russian and world literature, and never tired of pointing to the unfortunate consequences of Tolstoy's "aberration." Yet he was realist

enough not to be dogmatic about it. Time, and the overwhelming success of *War and Peace*, eventually induced him to change his mind about the book sufficiently to recommend it almost without reservations to Western European readers.

In the introductions to the French translations of "The Two Hussars"[31] and *War and Peace*[32] written much later, Turgenev stressed the originality of Tolstoy's creative method as against the methods of Sir Walter Scott and Alexandre Dumas *père*. Turgenev referred to *War and Peace* as one of the truly remarkable books of our time, a work that had captured as no other the spirit of Russia and its epoch. Time had also reconciled Turgenev to some features of Tolstoy's psychological method. In his preface to A. Badin's essay on *War and Peace*,[33] he praised Tolstoy's remarkable powers of psychological analysis and ability to create types. Such comments are in startling contrast, however, to the intemperance of Turgenev's comments in private.

Turgenev, however, did not like *Anna Karenina*[34] and never learned to appreciate the book. He thought of it as thoroughly ruined by a philosophy "at once infantile, arrogant, and mystic,"[35] containing the outlook of an ignorant Slavophile savage. In this instance Turgenev rejected the possibility of artistic accomplishment in a book by an ignoramus with obviously wrong ideas. He granted only that its descriptions of savage pursuits had excellence. His comments about the novel reflect his rancor and vexation over Tolstoy's refusal to give up his prejudices, for which Turgenev blamed the Slavophiles. "I do not like *Anna Karenina*," he wrote to Polonsky on 13 May 1875, "although there are some truly splendid pages in it (the races, mowing, and the hunt); but the rest is sour, smells of Muscovy, incense, the old maid, Slavdom, landed squirearchy, etc." He found in *Anna Karenina* the result of Muscovite backwardness and rank prejudice. "I have yet to read the latest installment of *Anna Karenina*," he wrote to Iu. P. Vrevskaia on 22 March 1876, "but I am sorry to say that I can see which way the whole novel is headed. No matter how great Tolstoy's talent is, he won't be able to scramble out of that Muscovite morass into which he waded. Orthodoxy, the nobility, Slavophilism, gossip, the old town, Katkov, Antonina Bludov, ignorance, arrogance, patrician habits, army esprit de corps, resentment of outsiders, sour cabbage soup, and lack of soap. In a word—chaos. And in this chaos must perish an extraordinarily gifted man. but that is the way it always works in good old Russia." Turgenev was convinced to the end that

chronic confusion prevailed in Tolstoy's mind and produced an unhealthy state of gloomy, life-denying nihilism. Of this he found evidence in Tolstoy's *Confession*[36] (not published until 1884 after Turgenev's death but circulated in manuscript since 1882). "I got a few days ago," Turgenev wrote to the writer D. V. Grigorovich on 31 October 1882, "through the good offices of a very nice Moscow lady that confession of Tolstoy's that was denied publication by the censors. I read it with the greatest of interest. This is a piece remarkable through its sincerity, truthfulness, and power of conviction. Yet it is based on faulty premises throughout—and ultimately leads to a gloomy denial of all vitality in human life. . . . This, too, is a nihilism of sorts. By the way, I am surprised that Tolstoy, who, among other things, denies art, nevertheless surrounds himself with artists." Turgenev remained forever on the alert for signs of Tolstoy's renewed concern with message.[37]

One cannot, of course, judge casual epistolary comments as one would published commentary that presumably issued from greater reflection. However, the subsequent change of his first impressions to agree with public opinion does not dispell the suspicion that Turgenev first reacted out of personal animosity, if not poor taste.[38] Since Turgenev was a man of considerable intellectual honesty and critical integrity, his private comments suggest that he was less intent on an objective judgment of the merits of Tolstoy's work than on promoting his own ideas. But in attacking Tolstoy's competence as a historian, philosopher, and psychologist, Turgenev was not motivated by narrow prejudice, but by the humanitarian ideals of his day and, above all, an earnest desire to prepare Tolstoy for enlightened leadership in teaching the Russian people (who indeed needed such leadership) to adjust to European progress and in guiding them along the thorny path of acquiring more culture.Turgenev's rancor and frustration, seeing Tolstoy neglect this task, may have mellowed in time from the realization of another of his goals, as Tolstoy became a writer of European stature.

However, on the whole it must be said that the aesthetic critics subscribed to the vicious cliché of the times—the consensus that Tolstoy's art was great, but his ideas were worthless or weak. To the aesthetic critics Tolstoy's intellectual abilities were limited in regard to both the form and substance of his works. It was only his intuitive, creative aspect that they thought deserved full and unstinting admiration as a talent of truly miraculous proportions. The *narod-*

niki, on the other hand, thought that there was already too much of the intuitive element in Tolstoy's works and wanted him to increase the degree of his conscious participation in them. So, although their position is very similar to that of the aesthetic critics, it has a slight but significant shift in emphasis: without wanting Tolstoy to be any less of an artist, the *narodniki* wanted him to be more of a thinker.

THE *NARODNIK* CRITICS

The judgments that the *narodniki* made concerning Tolstoy and his work closely resemble those of the aesthetic critics. For example, the critic A. Ia. Piatkovsky (1840–1904), a moderate *narodnik*,[1] expressed opinions about Tolstoy that were quite similar to those of P. V. Annenkov, a liberal aesthete. The position of many a *narodnik* was in fact aesthetic, that is, largely comprised of formal considerations regarding works of art; but it accommodated greater consideration of social issues. Reviews of Tolstoy's work by the writer V. G. Korolenko (1853–1921) represent this stance. His views are worthy of particular note because they probably inspired some of V. I. Lenin's opinions about Tolstoy. Korolenko likened the sober clarity of Tolstoy's work to a great mirror that reflects a beautiful sunny reality, with a limitless capacity to reflect every little detail. This he contrasted with the "fantastic whirlwind of modernism," which distorted reality and reflected nonexistent phantoms. Korolenko compared Tolstoy to Dostoevsky, Zola, and Ibsen, and found Tolstoy's art superior to all: the "distortions" of Dostoevsky, the "narrow rationalism" of Zola, and the "bloodless symbolism" of Ibsen. Korolenko declared that he felt that Tolstoy was a true Russian sage, one who portrayed all of Russia as his hero. And despite the complexities of his vision, he avoided confusion. Korolenko, however, was much less impessed with Tolstoy's ideas, which he described as "stillborn offspring" of Tolstoy's creative instinct. This

was an organic notion, common in the writings of Apollon Grigor'ev, who used to refer to products of conscious creativity as stillborn. Korolenko went on to define Tolstoy's philosophy as an obsession with the idea of harmonious simplicity. He accused Tolstoy of philosophical inconsistency; Tolstoy stacked evidence, according to Korolenko, to confirm a posteriori his a priori assumptions. Tolstoy's religious stories, Korolenko said, which were static reconstructions of simplistic biblical subjects, exemplified his method.[2] Korolenko furthermore dismissed Tolstoy's religious stories and stories for the people as unsatisfactory folklore, inferior to everything else Tolstoy created. The columnist A. M. Skabichevsky (1838–1910), who wrote under the pseudonym "average reader" (*zauriadnyi chitatel'*) singled out Tolstoy's one-sided analysis as the cause of tensions in Tolstoy's dual nature as an artist and a thinker.[3] Following also in substance the argument developed by Mikhailovsky (see below), Skabichevsky saw in the inability of the child-protagonist of *Childhood* to relate to the adult world around him a portent of the woes of Tolstoy's alienated heroes. Skabichevsky somewhat arbitrarily compared Tolstoy and Gogol as pursuing erratic courses, vacillating between an urge to create and an urge to preach and to proselytize, with the latter ultimately dominating and stifling the former.[4] Least concerned with the artistic and formal aspects of Tolstoy's work was the critique of *Anna Karenina* by the radical *narodnik* P. N. Tkachev (1844–86).[5] He asserted, among other things, that Apollon Grigor'ev was correct in warning of the one-sided excesses of Tolstoy's analysis: analysis had undone all that was sound in Tolstoy's position and finally led him into the sterile world of extreme and bigoted Christianity. Thus, in addition to general agreement with the aesthetic critics, at least some of the *narodniki* displayed a certain affinity with the organic thinking of Apollon Grigor'ev.

MIKHAILOVSKY

The leading spokesman of the liberal *narodniki*, Nikolai K. Mikhailovsky (1842–1904), was the strongest voice in Russian literary criticism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Over a period of thirty years, Mikhailovsky wrote a great deal about Tolstoy. His long thematic article in three parts, "The Right and Left Hands [dextra and sinistra] of Leo Tolstoy," was followed by "Something on Morality—About Count L. N. Tolstoy," "A. N.

Ostrovsky—More about Count Tolstoy," "Once More about Tolstoy," "About *The Kreutzer-Sonata*," "About Count Tolstoy and Narcotics," "Shelgunov and Pozdnyshev," "In One of the Tolstoyan Colonies," "Personal Reminiscences about Count Tolstoy—Tolstoy and Mr. Mechnikov as Hygienists," "Ideals and Idols," "About Count L. N. Tolstoy," "Count Tolstoy's 'Master and Man,'" "*What Is Art*?—A Treatise by Mr. L. N. Tolstoy," "Once More on Art and Count Tolstoy," "Count L. N. Tolstoy on Monthly Journals," numerous disgressions on Tolstoy in other articles, and a number of reviews of books about Tolstoy.[6] In all these articles and essays Mikhailovsky used his somewhat elusive initial hypothesis about a conflict innate in Tolstoy's nature as an artist and thinker to explain the paradoxes in Tolstoy's inconsistencies.

Mikhailovsky was a sociologist and critic who wrote brilliant polemic articles. His standing and importance as a literary critic is greatly diminished today,[7] yet he was in vogue with his contemporaries,[8] influenced many subsequent critics, and impresses some scholars as authoritative even today.[9] Indirectly, through his influence on Plekhanov, Gorky, and Lenin, Mikhailovsky inspired the official Soviet position on Tolstoy, with its dismissal of Tolstoy's moral and religious teachings as arrant reactionary nonsense but its praise for the realism and social significance of his creative work. The ambivalence of the Soviet position echoes Mikhailovsky's ambivalent view of Tolstoy. Mikhailovsky recognized the greatness of Tolstoy's intuitive creative talent; at the same time he attacked any of Tolstoy's ideas that he thought were generated by Tolstoy's intuitive genius in conflict with, or apart from, his rational intellect. Such ideas, Mikhailovsky believed, were extremely archaic, damaged Tolstoy's creative work, and ruined his nonfiction.

Mikhailovsky was thus well within the traditions of nineteenth-century Russian criticism. In his essays he often would neglect the objective sociological aspect of the work he discussed, to concentrate on subjective psychological aspects and matters related to the author himself. In his analyses of the author's actions and motives he used the so-called subjective method[10] that he developed in his sociological studies and that he adapted to use in literary criticism. In his critiques he examined the author's character and attitude closely, as the prime factors in the genesis of his work, and attempted to focus on a character trait that would explain everything about him. In Tolstoy he found this feature to be a dual personality.

Mikhailovsky both admired and detested Tolstoy as an arrogant aristocrat who used people and did not care for them. He interpreted everything about Tolstoy in the light of an inner controversy between Tolstoy's rational and irrational drives. He saw Tolstoy as a talented writer who wrote to compensate for his personal weaknesses, and who was constantly misled into unreality and fantasy, presumably because he was unable to overcome his preoccupations and write about life objectively. Mikhailovsky's attempts to present these paradoxical aspects of Tolstoy's character as a result of a split archaic/modern personality were not entirely successful. He failed to find convincing causes of Tolstoy's behavior, nor did he present an objective study of the nature, genesis, and meaning of Tolstoy's work. His sophisticated ideas about Tolstoy, however, are a most interesting study of Tolstoy's character and its reflections in Tolstoy's work.

Mikhailovsky examined the dual nature of Tolstoy in "The Right and Left Hands of Leo Tolstoy" (1875),[11] where he also concerned himself with Tolstoy's pedagogical writings. He claimed to have discovered a profound disunion between the progressive and traditional sides of Tolstoy's personality that was the result of an incongruous combination between a civilized and a savage mind:

> There are within Count Tolstoy two persons who have very little in common. One of them ("dextra") is bold, resolute, craves activity, takes nothing on faith, and is ready to submit any fact, no matter how thoroughly it may be sanctified by tradition or any other authority, to the most rigorous examination; should the fact fail to withstand query by reason and conscience, Count Tolstoy sweeps it aside like the worthless trash it appears to be even if backed by mountains of usage. The other ("sinistra") is timid, afraid of responsibility, or at least it strongly dislikes those who dare to act on their own, sees in facts some kind of a mysterious and irresistible might and power that must not and cannot be resisted by either deed, word, or thought. [7:197–98]

On the one hand, Mikhailovsky said, Tolstoy was an arrogant, self-righteous, aggressive aristocrat and a typical Russian intellectual. On the other, he was an artless, intuitive, creative genius. Not only did the two personalities disagree, but sometimes they acted as though one were not even aware of the other's existence. They were also unequal in size and texture. The intellect was small and intense. The intuition was vast and subdued. In action they appeared uncoordinated. Tolstoy's writings were filled with alternat-

ing artistic and intellectual passages, vigorously promoting sharply conflicting messages. Mikhailovsky implied a periodic failure of the connection between the two sides of Tolstoy's brain. As a result, Tolstoy was literally functioning as a man whose right hand did not know what his left hand was doing. The gist of Mikhailovsky's argument was that Tolstoy was, not consistently, but occasionally a very poor thinker. And it was those occasions that aroused Mikhailovsky's interest as a critic and amateur psychologist. Mikhailovsky speculated that both sides of Tolstoy's personality filtered the contents of his unconscious inspiration through to his conscious mind. There was no conflict so long as the tendencies of the conscious mind and the unconscious archaic personality did not diverge too greatly. Should tensions arise, however, the two sides, cooperative until then, confronted the conscious ego in personified form and behaved like systems split off from the basic personality, that is, as though they were two altogether different persons. The best way to see this was to compare the styles and ideas in Tolstoy's fiction and nonfiction.

The general public, Mikhailovsky guessed, knew Tolstoy as "a great writer and a poor thinker" only through his fiction, in which, of course, his rational side necessarily yielded control to his creative, irrational side. However, one gained an entirely different impression of his style and mode of thinking from his pedagogical tracts, which few read because, compared to his fiction, they were insignificant. But from these tracts Tolstoy emerged as a man of a different caliber: a vigorous but mediocre intellect, a self-willed, original, and truculent thinker, and an able, if clumsy, writer. His ideas were progressive, but his language was blunt, awkward, resourceful, and aggressively individualistic. Thus it bore little or no resemblance to the accomplished style but conservative ideas of his fiction, which was accounted for by his other side. It was remarkable how little there was in common between the two personalities. As an illustration Mikhailovsky cited the story "Polikushka" (1862), in which Tolstoy had dramatized the disastrous effects of clumsy interference by civilized man in the affairs of the common folk. This fictional story contained in a nutshell all the basic elements of Tolstoy's former preoccupation with such questions. Predictably, its theme was that man should not interfere in the lives of others. This theme conflicted, however, with the message on the same subject put forth by Tolstoy in his nonfictional stories and didactic

tracts. Tolstoy took a very different stand in "A Walk in the Woods," a sketch written about the same time (1862) and published in Tolstoy's own journal, *Iasnaia Poliana* [The clear glade]. The sketch was noteworthy as an expression of Tolstoy's progressive rational position because it was unusually well written, suggesting to Mikhailovsky that it was produced with the cooperation of his artistic, intuitive side, whereas its message obviously came from Tolstoy's rational side. Its style made it stand out from the usual clumsy form of the pedagogical journal. Mikhailovsky considered it a rare example of optimum cooperation by both sides of Tolstoy's personality at once, when things were as they should be: the message was produced by Tolstoy's reason, and the form was supplied by his intuition. The idea of the sketch ran counter to the glorification of family and its absolute authority over the child, a traditional view that supplied practically all of Tolstoy's fiction, however. Here family upbringing was not necessarily a desirable circumstance in the life of a child if it perpetuated bestial customs. It was therefore the duty of civilized man to interfere: to arouse the consciousness of young peasants and stimulate their thinking, so that they would want to arrive at a higher stage of enlightenment than their primitive elders. Mikhailovsky noted the lucidity and conciseness of narrative, which he compared favorably with the best in Tolstoy's fiction. He noted also that, compared to "Polikushka," the sketch was a success, inasmuch as its point was clear, its form perfect, and it left the reader with a definitive and lasting impression. Mikhailovsky concluded that Tolstoy would obviously be better off, as both an artist and a thinker, if he let his rational side maintain control.

Mikhailovsky saw the conflict between Tolstoy's reason and intuition as the rule rather than the exception. He described the conflict in this way: when reason interfered with the irrational aspect of the creative process, confusion resulted, followed frequently by sudden vehemence in the promotion of wrong ideas. When intuition interfered wth conscious logical reasoning, the result was sudden irrationality, a regression to primitive thinking patterns which produced what would be, for Tolstoy, rather unexpected inanities: "In this respect he can sink (philosophically speaking) so low as to produce the following phrase: 'not incidentally, but deliberately has nature surrounded the rural man with rural conditions, and the urban man with urban conditions.' . . . I cannot simply note this

startling phenomenon and then pass by it without further comment. I stop before it in a condition of profound bewilderment and ask myself: how could a man of the intellectual stature of Count Tolstoy pronounce such a platitude?" (*DS*, p. 135). Mikhailovsky suggested that when bogged in this state, Tolstoy behaved like a primitive who is not only the passive victim of his emotions but also singularly incapable of rational judgment whenever he experiences what he imagines to be meaningful coincidences. Usually an adroit, able thinker, Tolstoy would suddenly find himself unable to collect his thoughts or to draw obvious logical inferences from commonplace coincidences that, for him, acquired ominous significance. At issue was another autobiographical sketch where Tolstoy described how, after a gambling loss, he prayed for financial help and promptly received a money letter the following morning:

> . . . The story about the gambling loss in the Caucasus can serve as an illustration of such an attitude to facts. The count is so rattled, so crushed by the fact of circumstantial coincidence between occurrences that have no causal connection at all, that he does not even try to lift a single critical finger of thought against it. A fifteen-year-old could figure out the time necessary for the arrival of a letter from Chechna to Tiflis, but Count Tolstoy, an intellectual giant of sorts, is unable to figure it out. This case is really extraordinary in its obvious and perplexing incongruity. . . .
>
> I ask myself, how can a man of such a powerful, penetrating, and, so-to-speak, pitilessly truthful intellect as Count Tolstoy appears to have in almost all of his artistic and many of his theoretical works, how can such a man write such obvious absurdities? . . . At that time I was ashamed to dwell on the gambling loss episode, ashamed for the count, and yet his argumentation about this episode is quite typical of him; and so highly characteristic of forms of this type I just could not and would not ignore them and hide from the reader. I summarized these truly amazing turns of thought in Count Tolstoy's "left hand," which, as if obeying the instructions of the Gospels, does not know what his "right hand" is doing. [7:197–98]

Mikhailovsky found massive evidence of acute antagonism between Tolstoy's reason and intuition spread through a major portion of his works. *War and Peace* produced vivid examples of the seesaw pattern of such mutual interferences during the creative process. Most of *War and Peace* was clearly the result of straightforward creative inspiration, Mikhailovsky said, but many passages just as clearly were the product of Tolstoy's intellect. The tensions of creativity, however, had caused the overall effect to be a series of

weird conflicts of form and message that jolted the reader and defied understanding without reference to the basic conflict within Tolstoy that could also be explained, Mikhailovsky suggested, as a conflict between Tolstoy's conscious and unconscious self. Sizable portions of the novel, inspired by his spontaneous love of pleasure and creature comfort, evidently came into being without notice and interference from Tolstoy's puritanical intellect. But the merry tidings of these passages, and those extolling the aristocratic family ideal, were challenged in other passages that were inspired by Tolstoy's awakened intellect. Elsewhere mutual interference was even more apparent.

Mikhailovsky, who in 1868 had suggested that at least some of the "mystic" pages of *War and Peace* clearly revealed the author as an archaic thinker "frightened of the present, enamored of the past, and toying with the idea of embracing Islam,"[12] came to believe that whenever Tolstoy's wit and intuition joined forces under creative tension, strange conflicts ensued: a series of willful, contradictory statements about history and philosophy that should never have been allowed to become part of the novel in the first place. They were forcibly inserted by Tolstoy's intellect over the objections of his artistic sense. Those passages were meant to offset Tolstoy's implicit resentment of Napoleon and other self-willed historic figures who dared inject themselves into the course of history, by indicating that such interference with historic events was, after all, not only desirable but necessary. Yet despite such drastic oscillations in point of view, Tolstoy's basic personality did not change:

> In this whirlwind of changing moods and views Tolstoy nevertheless remains Tolstoy; all of the quick changes that occur in him constitute a fast rotation around one and the same axis, the opposite ends of which I tried to place in his right and left hands. . . .
>
> Changed were, according to circumstances, only the theoretical views that illuminated those muscular twitches for Count Tolstoy himself. And these changes, generally, can be reduced to an increase in the activity of now the right hand, now the left hand of the count, although both of them are known to move, at least occasionally, at the same time. [*PS*, 1:261, 264]

Mikhailovsky suggested that Tolstoy's erratic behavior was perhaps caused by the pressure of civilized thinking on the savage side of his mind. Such thinking had created for Tolstoy a complex set of interrelated problems that brought about an unusually acute state of

self-consciousness and an aroused conscience. Tolstoy had two reasons for taking an unusual interest in the peasant even without wishing to be a soothsayer to the Russian people. First, aware of his, by modern standards, unfair privileges, Tolstoy wanted to give back to the peasant all that he owed him. However, he did not care to part with his privileges. The dilemma caused a traumatic conflict of consciousness that forced him onto an erratic course as he searched, under pressure of guilt feelings, for ways to resolve the dilemma quickly, and in a way that would benefit the peasant without depriving the giver. He found that he could best discharge his debt as a creative writer, rather than a social reformer. Tolstoy felt no obligation to write only for the privileged classes, in which role he would remain as remote as ever from the common folk; he wanted to benefit the people as their teacher and sage, who would explain to them the ways and means of becoming modern and civilized, without being at the same time corrupted by civilization, as had happened to him. Hence, Mikhailovsky said, Tolstoy's recurrent vain attempts to write for the common folk in a simple manner. He failed because he did not know what he was doing. He could not be a spiritual leader of the common people. He could not even be a good writer of folklore because he was too civilized and too complex, and when he tried to simplify issues, he ruined the quality of his work.

Mikhailovsky found Tolstoy's stories for the people dismal failures. Even as they represented an experiment in a new genre and a venture into the realm of primitive didactic art, the stories seemed incredibly bad. Above all, they were quite remote from actuality. They were designed to reach a much larger and less sophisticated audience and explain to them the advantages of Tolstoy's latest outlook, and, accordingly, Tolstoy had suddenly abandoned his celebrated realism as unsuitable and moved into the realm of blatant superstition. Mikhailovsky listed some of the superstitious elements Tolstoy employed in telling his stories for the common folk:

> To begin with, let us discuss the miraculous element that is blatant in the bulk of Count Tolstoy's stories for the people. In the story "What People Live By" the protagonist is an angel. In "Candle" a wax candle does not go out despite wind and concussion. In "Two Old Men" one of the old men miraculously appears to the other in a vision and "with arms spread out like a priest at the altar"; on top of that, "golden bees form a crown around his head, buzzing but not stinging him." In the story "Where Love Is, There Is God" apparitions figure.

> In the story "Three Old Men" the old men walk on water. On the other hand, in one of the "texts to explain popular religious prints" ("The Fiend's Stuff Is Attractive, but God's Stuff Is Solid") the devil is on the loose, and in the "Tale of Ivan the Fool" several devils play a most unusually virulent role and parade all over the place in full devils' uniform with tails, cloven hoofs, etc.
>
> All of this fantastic paraphernalia is called forth from the realm of nonbeing solely for the purpose of serving as accessories to illustrate certain moral premises. Arbiters of pure aesthetics are, naturally, thoroughly displeased about all this. [6:381]

Mikhailovsky speculated that Tolstoy was attempting to adapt his style to the tastes and thinking habits of the common folk, who must have appeared to him as a pagan subculture among the Russians, or else he believed them to be subhuman simpletons who did not have the mental capacity to understand realism. Mikhailovsky doubted the wisdom of this line of reasoning. Even if one were to accept the dubious premise that by so doing one gained acceptance into the hearts and minds of the naïve and ignorant, it was still a question whether rank paganism was a sound premise for teaching Christian morality. Stylistically the stories were inconsistent. Lurid folklore alternated with vivid Tolstoyan realism:

> One may well ask whether superstition and prejudice are indeed a sound enough basis to build a dialogue with the people. I will say nothing against the form of the pure fairy tale, which Tolstoy uses, for example, in the "Tale of Ivan the Fool and His Two Brothers." There the entire narrative is uniformly fantastic as it is in real fairy tales and would not mislead anybody. But it is quite another matter when we are told a true story or, at least, something that has every appearance of a true story, and in a manner that can only be achieved by Tolstoy, so that people appear before us as though they were real flesh and blood, and then, in the midst of this thoroughly realistic picture, you are suddenly hit by an icy draft of spectral wind. [6:384]

All this, Mikhailovsky said, did not make it any easier for the naïve and ignorant to get the point of the story. And often it was obscured still further by the complete dependence of the moral premise on support from fantastic elements in some of the plots. Some stories even inadvertently produced an opposite impression from that presumably intended by the author:

> The man responsible for the miracle with the candle, the good peasant Mikheich, utters the good wish that there be "peace on earth and good will among men." This wish, however, does not come true.

> What does come true, though, and with truly remarkable zeal and efficiency, is the evil wish of another peasant who said [of the wicked estate manager] "let his belly burst and his guts spill out!" It seems to me that all this lends itself to a very different interpretation from the one supplied by Count Tolstoy, to wit, that real strength is not in goodness but in wickedness. Good rose to the occasion by performing a real miracle, yet nothing much happened, whereas evil only said a word and that word was realized promptly and with amazing accuracy. [6:385–86]

In most stories Tolstoy simply spread confusion, prejudice, and superstition, Mikhailovsky charged. He catered to the people's crassest prejudices but attacked some of their sound ideals and aspirations. Mikhailovsky found the proscription against force to combat naked aggression simply grotesque. The story of Ivan the Fool, he found, indicted the nonresistance theory better than any essay:

> When discussing nonresistance to evil theoretically all these details could be covered up, wrapped up in some pious commonplace. . . . An artistic image, however, is quite another thing. There you can see with your own eyes that the foreign invasion is incomplete, and you understand immediately why it is incomplete. For example, it would scarcely do to introduce the following artistic detail: the "Tarakan"—soldiers practice massive rape upon girl "fools" who, to Count Tolstoy's delight, do not resist such evil; meanwhile the boy "fools" just look on and keep repeating with a jolly mien: "Why don't you stay with us here for good, beloved friends!" To concoct such a dreadful lie about human life and feelings would be impossible not only for Tolstoy but even for a most dismally mediocre talent. [6:401]

The theory was hereby shown to be simply unrealistic. Tolstoy's childlike appeals to decency were unlikely to move the hearts of those who had no conscience. Meanwhile, by extolling the comforts and advantages of worry-free servitude, Tolstoy was unwittingly aiding the sinister establishment conspiracy to keep the common folk content with perpetual bondage. Mikhailovsky suggested that Tolstoy cease all such experiments in folklore and return to doing what he could do best: write for the sophisticated minority. He noted that Tolstoy also tried to discharge his obligation to the peasants by teaching their children, but was faced with a dilemma of how and what to teach; he seemed to believe that his own corruption prevented him from knowing. His intensive research into methods of teaching, moreover, did not provide him with answers.

Mikhailovsky's second explanation of Tolstoy's involvement with the peasant was that he was not a well-balanced person and needed the peasant to guide him to a more harmonious state. Tolstoy saw the peasant as a potentially superior human being who needed assistance to develop his full individuality, help which Tolstoy thought he could provide. In return, he wanted the peasant's inner harmony. Tolstoy did treat his peasants fairly, Mikhailovsky noted, unlike some Russian reformers who idolized them or treated them condescendingly; Tolstoy's peasants resembled animals: intuitive, uncouth, and often immoral. But, like children and savages, they possessed an inner harmony that their corrupt masters in polite society could only dream about, and that Tolstoy envied and admired because he himself had lost it in becoming excessively civilized. His fascination with the peasant derived from his naïve hope that if he gave the peasant a measure of his inordinate rationality and developed some of the peasant's intuitive qualities himself, it would be a fair trade that might restore or improve his own inner balance. Mikhailovsky doubted if the procedure would really benefit Tolstoy. The intuitive side of his own personality was already in ascendance. The inner harmony he wanted should come through a compensatory strengthening of his rational abilities and an increased ability to relate to the outside world. Tolstoy was too busy coping with his own problems to be able to help others cope with theirs.

Mikhailovsky thought of Tolstoy as an artist whose limited intellect was bravely attempting to keep up with, and sort out, the vast quantities of undigested, undifferentiated impressions his intuitive genius poured forth. Throughout his life Tolstoy had heroically searched for truth and fought various deceptions, often changing his position completely when he discovered its errors; he was never discouraged and continued always to search: this zeal for truth was the one constant in an otherwise mercurial artistic personality. Tolstoy did not understand himself, was often unable to determine the truth, and was at times afraid of life, often mistaking it for death. Generally speaking, he was like a child or a blind man who demanded answers that no one, least of all he himself, could supply. Mikhailovsky saw in this an indication of Tolstoy's need to develop further his floundering intellect and to discard some of his puerile prejudices and superstitions.

Tolstoy, then, was mistaken in claiming that the hero of his stories was truth. His obsession with the concept of a personal death—his existential memento mori—directly contradicted his powerful interest in the art of living. His real hero, Mikhailovsky held, was not truth but life, and the villain, of course, death. No other writer had ever devoted so much space to descriptions of death or dwelled so lovingly on the details of dying. Indeed, Tolstoy often exaggerated the horrors of death; it was for him an unnatural thing, and it scarred the souls of those who witnessed it. Tolstoy, moreover, was a crusader who found in death a personal adversary. He was an artist who loved life but was thrilled by death, and scorning obvious designations, he sometimes confused the two, as he did truth and falsehood. His tract "On Life" was actually a tract on death; he tried to prove that one should not be afraid of death, but failed. Tolstoy's experiments with physical labor were also attempts to strengthen and lengthen life. Behind all this Mikhailovsky found an insane desire to achieve immortality while still alive. Occasionally, however, Tolstoy would settle on a compromise: he would try to reduce the fear of death by poisoning the love of life. This was his Buddhist theory of reducing interest in life until one no longer cared about death. Mikhailovsky found such a line of reasoning intellectually unsound.

Because Tolstoy was so often unable to judge the truth, he had honed his sensory perceptions to extraordinary sharpness; but the skill, Mikhailovsky said, was ineffectual because truth was for Tolstoy a subjective matter. It was difficult for him to differentiate subjective and objective truth because his preoccupation with the self overshadowed everything else. He thought of himself as the vessel of absolute truth, whereas external truth was only relative. He was also wont to think of others as extensions of himself and to see them as sharing his own problems. Thus Tolstoy's reform schemes were always designed to solve the world's problems for himself, as though the two were equivalent:

> Count Tolstoy saw many horrors in Moscow slums and asylums for the poor and became convinced that these horrors do not lend themselves too easily to correction with any of the so-called foolish methods he has recommended. But, after being horrified, he very quickly found a new method for eliminating poverty, human degradation, and misery. Having decided that one "cannot live like that,"

> that is, live surrounded by the beggars, starvelings, drunken derelicts, and prostitutes who lived in the Liapin asylum, Count Tolstoy quickly left for the country and, in his own words, "thus solved for himself the terrible question that faces the *entire world*." . . . He told us himself of *his own* great good fortune. 'Tis sure, he adds, that "very soon" many many others will follow his example, eventually everybody, and so, everybody will be as fortunate as he is. [*PS*, 1:264]

This penchant for merging a subjective with an objective need Mikhailovsky found very typical of Tolstoy, and caused by immaturity. Tolstoy's archaic intuitive mind never clearly defined the boundary between himself and the surrounding universe. When dominated by his intuitive ideas, he always tried to serve both simultaneously in the kind of mystique of mutual participation. His search for religion was one of such efforts. And the harsh moral code he promulgated was aimed chiefly against his own unconquerable fondness for the pleasures of the flesh. His writing, which was to benefit the people, was first and foremost an effort to sort out in his mind the formidable problems of identity with which he was struggling. His marvelously concrete style was an effective artistic medium, but its primary purpose was to help him see things and relationships more clearly, to establish his bearings inside his own bewildered mind.

Tolstoy's creative writing was subjective in nature, Mikhailovsky emphasized. Although his pedagogical tracts were relatively free of subjectivity, his fiction invariably dealt with some profound personal problem of confronting reality, thinly disguised to seem fictional. Certain elements of Tolstoy's inner drama were repeated in his fiction more often than others, but all of his works represented one or another and were thus autobiographical records. His *Confession* was a case in point. It gave no evidence of the remorse one would expect in a voluntary confession; Tolstoy's attitude was not at all like that of a repentant sinner. The *Confession* and his many articles on similar subjects were dramatic rituals whereby he periodically recounted his success in shedding a current batch of vices, pointed with pride to his latest achievement in self-control, expounded the advantages of leading a virtuous life, and breezily requested others to follow suit. In general, Mikhailovsky saw considerable similarity between Tolstoy and the famed biologist I. I. Mechnikov (1845–1916), in that each preached a variety of Epicu-

rean hygiene. Tolstoy's writing functioned as a tool for bringing reality under his control. Although his works were noted for their naturalness and truthful depiction of life, his art was far from neutral and impartial, and it always advanced a highly subjective, personal point of view. Tolstoy expressed admiration for nature and horror of artifice, he condemned anyone who tried to control reality, yet this was the very thing he himself did: in his fiction Tolstoy fought with himself to control his impulses; and in his nonfiction he fought society as if it were a parent.

Mikhailovsky interpreted Tolstoy's development as an individual as a drawn-out process of weaning himself from society in order to become independent of it. Most of his fiction dealt with this problem. From Olenin to Levin, his heroes struggled to sever their ties with society. They repudiated its values as artificial and evil and tried to replace them with new ones acquired from the peasant, which they declared to be genuine and true. Tolstoy's struggle was made more difficult because of his fondness for the values he had resolved to discard. There was a correlation between the intensity of his castigations of the corrupt ways of society and his obvious relish for the cozy atmosphere of its "ladies' boudoirs." The vehemence of Tolstoy's attacks on various social conventions reflected his attachment to them, and, by contrast, his treatment of the peasants' faults was relatively mild and objective. Tolstoy applied a double standard in extolling the ideal of the family; he judged common and aristocratic families quite differently.

Mikhailovsky discovered curious parallels between the prophetic activities of Tolstoy and other Russian writers who, as *raznochintsy*, belonged to a different milieu. Tolstoy seemed concerned about signs of disintegration of the Russian family unit, a phenomenon that seemed to accompany the change of Russia from a tribal to a civilized society; but unlike Dostoevsky, who saw in it a significant portent of things to come, Tolstoy was only interested in preserving the status quo. For Mikhailovsky, a prominent *raznochinets* himself, the issue was, more or less, whether Tolstoy was justified in wanting to preserve a part of society that could not be saved without the preservation of its corrupt and dissolute tribal ways (*DS*, pp. 136–37). In the fiction, Mikhailovsky claimed, the principle of the family alone sustained the rickety tribal structure of high society. But the double standard that Tolstoy unconsciously observed suggested

that his natural intuition, which favored the status quo, resented the reforming tendencies of his intellect. Its interference was spontaneous, akin to the principle of conservatism in nature:

> His right hand removes every obstacle he meets on his way, be it the despotism of family, society, this or that environment, or this or that prejudice. But Count Tolstoy also has his left hand. It induces him, on the contrary, to leave obstacles alone, to preserve the inviolability of established prejudicial practices and environments on the basis of that strange logic that "not incidentally but deliberately has nature surrounded the rural man with rural conditions, and the urban man with urban conditions." All you have to do is extend this remarkable aphorism, which you have every right to do, and you may confidently assert that not incidentally but deliberately has nature surrounded the Karenins, Vronskys, and Oblonskys with those surroundings with which they are surrounded; that not incidentally but deliberately has nature surrounded the beggar with beggarly conditions, and the ignoramus with conditions of ignorance. And you will be able to justify every kind of obscurity and every kind of filth. . . . So, the point of departure for the contradictions within Tolstoy is the point where his thoughts begin to double. And after a while you may see the right hand of Count Tolstoy rise again and energetically sweep aside the mess that his left hand has made. [*DS*, p. 173]

According to Mikhailovsky, Tolstoy's works could be divided into two kinds—those that satisfied Tolstoy, and those that did not—and his judgment depended on which side of his nature was in ascendance during the creative process. In the first he succeeded in mastering a moral problem; in the second he failed, was sidetracked, and, in time, came to regard the effort as bad art. In the latter category, *The Cossacks* and *Anna Karenina* also recorded personality crises that resulted from a deadlock in the contest between the two sides of his nature. Both works dealt with the dilemma of civilized man longing for a return to Arcadia, yet knowing full well that for him such a return was impossible, and wistfully contemplating the naïve life of simple people. Both works dealt with the poison of skepticism. In both the contradictions and irrationality of Tolstoy's dual nature were obvious: a rebellious dislike of routines, but a yen for designing and following routines; a fascination with the routines and cycles of nature and a yearning to merge with them and abandon one's individuality, but yet a desire to assert one's individuality. After twenty years Levin continued the same. Mikhailovsky considered such repetitions evidence that Tolstoy's ideas were caught in a vicious circle, due to the irreconcil-

able differences between the demands of his intellect and his unconscious urges. In *Anna Karenina* Tolstoy's inner drama, however, had reached the proportions of a crisis. The issues had come close to the surface and the conflict was quite apparent: the novel itself was made up of two incompatible stories without any visible connection, representing the animal and intellectual sides of Tolstoy's personality. Tolstoy was dissatisfied not just with the form but with the content of the book. He wrote it during a period of change in his life, when he was struggling to free himself from his old habits and embrace an entire set of new beliefs. In large part, the book still reflected the old Tolstoy, at home in the frivolous world of ladies' boudoirs and bestial pleasures involving characters such as the centaur-like Vronsky. In dwelling on the fine psychological detail of Anna's and Vronsky's relationship, Tolstoy must have experienced a sense of futility. He wanted to abandon a project that imperiled his own moral progress and pleased only a narrow circle of high society. He was ready to make a clean sweep and introduce the new world of Konstantin Levin and his ideas about helping the peasant and leading a simple, virtuous life. Tolstoy must have been thoroughly vexed at being unable to do so right away, and his vexation sometimes reached the intensity of wanting to kill Anna and the story that he hated. All this, Mikhailovsky found, was externalized in the somber mood of the novel and Anna's suicide. Yet when Tolstoy did finally break with society he did so, to Mikhailovsky's regret, not as a mature and enlightened individual, but as a bigot who had relinquished his intellect. Mikhailovsky found Levin's smug acquiescence in the status quo and a solution to the world's problems "just for himself" typical of this kind of aberrant Tolstoyan thinking. It stemmed from a wrong interpretation of the peasant's virtue as "minding his own business," which, so far as Tolstoy was concerned, was only potential, not actual: Tolstoy had nothing to gain from acquiring the peasant's bigotry and obscurity *instead* of his inner harmony, although the latter, Mikhailovsky believed, was an appropriate condition for Tolstoy to desire.

Mikhailovsky was, on the whole, sympathetic toward Tolstoy's ideas about the peasant, which he interpreted in the light of his own ideas about the layman (*profan*). His layman (who resembles Montaigne's *homme suffisant*) was the last vestige of harmonious individuality in a homogenized civilized society and, as an indi-

vidual, superior to the one-sidedly sophisticated intellectual whose place in society Mikhailovsky likened to the narrow function of a toe (*palets ot nogi*). Intellectuals were the victims of organized society; they were seduced into surrendering their personal integrity and allowing their talents to be exploited in the service of society's frequently sinister suprapersonal goals. Some, Mikhailovsky said, attempted to reestablish their lost identities with various useless and wasteful esoteric projects, which he labeled homunculi, recalling an incident in J. W. Goethe's *Faust II* in which an alchemist labors to create an artificial man. Mikhailovsky regarded Platon Karataev in *War and Peace*, however, as an artificial human being, put together from abstract notions, and interpreted him as a sign of Tolstoy's growing corruption through fame. Mikhailovsky warned Tolstoy not to develop his intuitive artistry to the detriment of his intellect in order to accommodate the popular notion of him as a great writer and poor thinker.

By and large, though, Mikhailovsky assessed Tolstoy's chances of avoiding corruption pessimistically. Citing the parallel instances of Gogol's and Dostoevsky's attempts to become great tribal sages, he predicted for Tolstoy a development from a great writer into a bad prophet:

> Let us return to the concept of a great teacher. Count Tolstoy is obviously not in any great danger of succumbing to the uncommendable role of a fashionable prophet displayed in the salons of high society—he knows them too well not to know how to behave himself there. Nor is he threatened, one hopes, by many other things that Gogol and Dostoevsky picked up, who started out in humility and by inviting others to be humble with them, but ended up sanctimonious hypocrites and self-appointed spokesmen of God. Unfortunately, one must nevertheless look in that area [of mysticism, savage or tribal mentality] for the common bracket that would include all three. Count Tolstoy is akin to Gogol and Dostoevsky, not as a purveyor of a certain doctrine, but as a psychological type—a type woven of contradictions, of humility and arrogance, who talks about the great crane in the sky but is satisfied with a pitiful chickadee in hand; extends his theoretical embrace to all of mankind just so that he can admire himself all the more for it. [6:379]

Tolstoy, Mikhailovsky said, wanted to be a prophet but could not be a good one if he did not have control over his mind. Tolstoy's predicament was made worse by the fact that, in addition to fame and talent, he was endowed with fortune and position. This made it difficult for others to follow in his steps. So, rather than serve as a

national ideal, he was propelled to the status of a national idol—a leader who could only be admired, not followed. Mikhailovsky cited the example of Pisarev, another extremely self-centered Russian leader remote from reality, who developed a following of unthinking devotees and was idolized and eventually ruined by them.

In the 1880s and 1890s Mikhailovsky pointed to signs of acute disharmony and character erosion in Tolstoy. Tolstoy was claiming to have become a new man, but, according to Mikhailovsky, he was merely permitting his intuition to assume a dominant role in his life. He acted without thinking, like an imbecile or a fool-in-Christ. But his humility was a pretense and his meekness a sham. In his stories for the people he was expressing cynical contempt for life and was spreading confusion and gutter morality:

> But what an extraordinary and astonishing jumble all this is! What an outrageous contempt for life. . . . What a cold, argumentative attitude toward human feelings and deeds! I don't understand this. He must have picked up his teachings in the gutter. . . . And why is he scoffing at Spencer who, even if in different ways, is also demanding noninterference and nonresistance to evil. . . .
>
> He is simply contemptuous of life with all of its complex forms. He has built for himself "a little cell under a fir tree" where everybody is allowed to journey to pay him homage, and whence he is casting disdainful glances at the whole of God's world: slaves and freedmen, masters and men—what trifles! Nothing makes any difference, nothing else matters so long as everybody comes to listen to the wise old man in the little cell under the fir tree. . . . They may have had a mother killed, a brother tortured to death but he . . . he just continues to sit in his cell under the fir tree! [6:399]

His advice to his followers, Mikhailovsky observed, was not likely to lead him into any promised land of spiritual regeneration, but onto the sterile plateau of his own complacency. Mikhailovsky compared Tolstoy to an upside-down torch, producing soot instead of light. He claimed that at the root of Tolstoy's corruption was insincerity: a preference for the decoration instead of the real thing, unwillingness to undergo change, and a desire to defeat reality.

Mikhailovsky was inclined to regard both "The Death of Ivan Ilych" and "Master and Man" as doomsday stories wherein Tolstoy, for once, tried to bring religion to the sophisticated minority. Both stories were artistically successful because they were written in Tolstoy's realistic manner, since he aimed them at the educated reader. In both stories he failed miserably, however, each time he tried to convey his witless message of intuitive mysticism. Neither

story was as good as Tolstoy's best work. In "The Death of Ivan Ilych" Tolstoy resorted to gratuitous naturalism:

> The "Death of Ivan Ilych" is, no doubt, an excellent story, but to suggest that it is some kind of a Koh-i-noor among the diamonds of Russian literature, among which there are indeed some by Tolstoy, one must be in a state of befudddlement, a state in which one may find himself after he has knocked himself out genuflecting. To narrow the field down to comparisons only between Tolstoy's own works, and taking from among them only descriptions of death with flashbacks into the former life of the dying person; remembering the deaths of the lady, the coachman, and the tree in "Three Deaths," the death of old Bezukhov, the Bolkonskys, senior and junior, Karataev in *War and Peace,* the death of the master and the horse in "Kholstomer," remembering all this, any unprejudiced person has to admit that even within these bounds "The Death of Ivan Ilych" is not first, either in artistic beauty or in power and clarity of thought or, last but not least, in terms of fearless realism of description, although Ivan Ilych does perform there some unmentionable functions. [6:378]

Ivan Ilych was a rather sinister weakling who led a bleak, colorless existence and in the end made a feeble move toward love of others. The ending itself, Mikhailovsky found, was weak. The arbitrary, thoroughly unmotivated denouement was awkward and embarrassing (8:63–64). Mikhailovsky found that, from the moral tag in "The Death of Ivan Ilych," the contribution of Tolstoy's intellect to the process of creating "Master and Man" almost ten years later (1895) shifted to the elements of the plot. Here the protagonist Brekhunov, a corrupt but notably more adroit and resourceful character, was forced to perform an act of charity. The decline in Tolstoy's rational control over the story Mikhailovsky saw to be balanced by a commensurate increase in its irrational religious element. The story was dull and the plot too simple. As a story it came close to Tolstoy's tales for the people and was less successful than Gustave Flaubert's uniformly fantastic legend of "St. Julien l'Hospitalier," from which Tolstoy seemed to have borrowed some elements. Brekhunov, by contrast, was let off relatively easily; St. Julien devoted years to charitable works before he was finally allowed "to see the light," whereas Brekhunov's meager one good deed was hardly even a matter of choice. "Master and Man" advanced a second issue of questionable merit: the absurd notion that by reducing the will to live one could diminish fear of death. This idea was adumbrated by the passive, instinctive Nikita, a servile creature, barely concerned about prospects of passing from the hands

of his earthly master into those of his heavenly master, who seemed the superstitious, domestic version of Platon Karataev. Nikita was rewarded for his submissiveness. The moral of the story was that it was better to be a man than a master, but Mikhailovsky doubted that it would convince any real masters or men.

Mikhailovsky assessed *The Kreutzer-Sonata* (1889) as a spontaneous editorial outburst within a work of fiction, prompted by an urge to preach. The story showed the confusion that reigned in Tolstoy's mind about matters of form and content. It also showed the ineffectiveness of his art: the public stoutly ignored his moral message, but was persuaded to test the magic of the Beethoven piece in question, whose popularity had skyrocketed. The story illustrated the arbitrariness of Tolstoy's views, and the gross exaggerations and distortions they contained. The protagonist-narrator Pozdnyshev was a powerful artistic creation, but his views were a typical Tolstoyan mixture of truth and nonsense. Mikhailovsky lamented the potential for sophistry inherent in the writer's craft:

> This custom of peremptorily deciding important questions about human psychology without giving much thought to any substantiation is practiced by fiction writers particularly. It could be called fictional psychology. A fiction writer of pretty meager talents, after he has acquired enough proficiency, can tie together any two psychological elements, with every appearance of verisimilitude but actually quite arbitrarily, by establishing between them a chain of intermediary links. An innocent convict who has achieved serenity and an innocent convict whose manhood has been destroyed can both be made equally plausible by means of fictional psychology, which requires merely that no two adjacent pieces of psychological detail should clash too obviously. No great skill is required for this, and yet it often passes for profound knowledge of the human heart and fine psychological analysis, so that, eventually, the fiction writer himself begins to believe in his own profound knowledge of the human heart. [6:736]

Artistic persuasion by means of images had structural advantages over logical efforts, and could easily be misused by unconscionable writers of even mediocre talent. Pozdnyshev's monologue was an example of this powerful persuasion in the hands of a great, but confused, writer. Pozdnyshev, whom Mikhailovsky partially identified with Tolstoy, was a corrupt man whose perceptions were colored by his own depravity:

> So far as Pozdnyshev is concerned, we may presume that, apart from the artistic merits of his narrative, . . . he understands the real cause of his troubles only too well. . . .

> He is a libertine, a genuine libertine, that is to say, not so much a man who leads a depraved life as one who has put his whole soul into corruption. . . . His mind is so thoroughly fascinated by these seductive practices that he cannot even imagine any other state of affairs. . . . He imagines that music hypnotizes people and leaves them powerless in the hands of the musician. How, says he, can *The Kreutzer-Sonata* be performed in a drawing room full of ladies who wear open dresses? . . . He himself is unable to resist temptation, so he imagines everybody else to be in the same predicament. Pozdnyshev is extraordinarily scornful of education for women. . . . According to him, "any kind of upbringing for women is designed solely as an aid in capturing men. Some charm with music and looks, . . . others with erudition. . . ." You'd think anyone could understand that knowledge, education, are in themselves attractive enough to serve as their own purpose even without any utilitarian considerations. . . . But Pozdnyshev cannot grasp even such a relatively simple thing; his profligate soul sees everywhere only its own reflection. [6:768]

Mikhailovsky argued that, being a libertine, Pozdnyshev was an unusual character; and that therefore his experiences were hardly typical of mankind as a whole. Pozdnyshev had a thoroughly distorted view of the world. Like Tolstoy, Pozdnyshev could not distinguish objective from subjective truth, and he projected his own problems onto others. As a consequence, he demanded universal sexual restraint because he himself had been scorched by his experience with sex.

> If Pozdnyshev were not a genuine, thoroughgoing libertine, he would have been able to place his lamentable experience within certain limits. . . .
>
> Fortunately, or not, Pozdnyshev is not only a libertine but also an inconsistent fellow. He generalizes his bitter personal experience to the point where he sees a reflection of his own depraved soul everywhere and, deeply offended by such a picture of universal corruption, is willing even to put an end to mankind. . . . Having burnt himself on his own milk, he is blowing on other people's water, and what water—a whole ocean! The project is thoroughly insane, and Pozdnyshev himself ought to realize that it is only just empty talk. [6:770]

During the 1890s Tolstoy seemed to suffer what Mikhailovsky described as a general decline in his powers of reason. Mikhailovsky dismissed *What Is Art?* (1898) as another awkward and unsuccessful attempt to teach. He found the treatise confused and contradictory, its logic arbitrary and erratic, and its ideas exclusive and subjective. He praised the neatness of Tolstoy's definition of the

essential element in art as a matter of emotional stimulation with symbols, but found the method of proof arrogant, inaccurate, and inconsistent. Mikhailovsky flatly disagreed with Tolstoy that good art must be edifying or moral. Tolstoy disapproved of Pushkin and Beethoven, not because they were inferior to composers of popular ballads, but because at the time he felt no affinity for them and they did not serve his aim of producing contemporary folklore. Thus Tolstoy twisted the issue of popular art to suit his own dogmatic approach. It simply was not true, furthermore, that the common people looked for religious emotion in art. They sought pleasure in art just as anyone else did. The reason the tastes of the common people and the upper classes were so dissimilar was that their particular interests were worlds apart.

For Mikhailovsky *Resurrection* (1901) signified a rallying point in Tolstoy's career: a major confrontation with society and a return to realism after years of experimenting with fantastic notions. It also reflected a *narodnik* theme, and was the latest of Tolstoy's gallant efforts to rescue the peasant tribe (symbolically represented by Maslova) through fiction. This effort came forth in a heroic framework that was superficially quite grim and naturalistic, yet underneath had a fantastic, nearly folkloric structure. The novel vindicated many of Tolstoy's achievements, even though it reiterated some of his old prejudices about sex, the common folk, and the upper classes. Specifically, it represented a view that corresponded to his changed beliefs. This attitude, Mikhailovsky found, conflicted with many of Tolstoy's artistic practices and created considerable, sometimes even artistically fruitful, tension. The plot, at times diffuse and veering off into preoccupation, was well organized around two protagonists, a master and a peasant, who struggled to regain their lost integrity against a background of indifferent, unthinking multitudes. "Resurrection," which for Tolstoy apparently meant psychological individuation, for Mikhailovsky simply meant success in asserting oneself as an individual against society's pressure to conform.

Mikhailovsky noted that Tolstoy had generously borrowed from his past. Several elements of the novel recalled designs in Tolstoy's previous works. But it revealed an important difference in the handling of characters and a decline in artistic control, all suggesting a continuing struggle between Tolstoy's rational and irrational impulses. Like *War and Peace, Resurrection* contained a multitude of

characters, some of whom were very vivid even though they were only part of the background crowd. Mikhailovsky interpreted this as surrender of artistic control: a fortuitous display of a brilliant technique of quick characterization, which Tolstoy did not need in this novel. Unlike *War and Peace, Resurrection* could not accommodate highly individualized secondary characters within its much more conventional design. The design called for secondary characters to serve only as a background for the psychological drama of *Resurrection*. The real conflict was the struggle of the protagonists to regain their lost individuality by freeing themselves of the ingrained habit of thinking as everyone else thought. For Mikhailovsky this was the crux of the existential issue of the book. In principle, Tolstoy divided his people in *Resurrection* into those who lived by the light of their own thoughts and those who let themselves be guided by the thoughts of others. The difference was crucial and determined their chances of salvation: it meant the only chance to possess, or regain, one's individuality or soul.

Mikhailovsky approved of Tolstoy's new rational method of approaching this question, which he had formerly dealt with only in mystical or emotional terms. Mikhailovsky noted with satisfaction that Tolstoy's incisive analysis was used here for a good purpose. Extrinsic differences among members of the background crowd were highlighted to underscore their intrinsic similarity, their willingness to conform to the standards of their society:

> The background people in *Resurrection* vary widely in terms of their social position, education, intelligence, views, convictions, characters, personalities, etc.; and yet they all have, or at least the vast majority of them have, one thing in common: an inner calm. It is not that they always are happy and content with what they have; they are visited by boredom, minor and major failure, and resentful feelings, but nevertheless they all live without an inner conflict in the shade of rules whose validity they do not question and which firmly and precisely guide them on the path of life. . . .
>
> This unequivocal belief in the rules distinguishes not only the people who are as highly placed as General Kriegsmuth and Count Charsky, and Count Tolstoy does not always stress it with a touch of irony. . . . In Simonson, for instance, he values it very highly, and for the following reason: "all people live and act partly according to their own thoughts, partly according to the thoughts of other people. The ratio in which people live according to their own thoughts relative to the amount of time they spend living in agreement with the thoughts of others constitutes one of the main differences between them." [*PS*, 1:273]

The social being, Mikhailovsky said, did what was expected of him, never had a completely original thought, and never broke the rules. It was easy to conform and difficult not to, so that everyone tried to adapt himself quickly to what was socially expected. Yet the worth of an individual from Tolstoy's point of view corresponded to his determination to assert himself, resist the pressure of disapproval by others, and do what he thought was right, no matter what the consequences of his actions. Even criminals and political offenders did not, according to Tolstoy, change and become individuals when they were caught and punished. They merely continued in a different branch of society, prison, where they adjusted quickly to the new rules. From then on they behaved in the same pattern as regular members of society.

Mikhailovsky defended Tolstoy's representation of the judiciary. The novel conveyed his prejudices, of course, but Tolstoy had simply demonstrated that the judges served the status quo:

> Voices have been heard in the press, accusing Count Tolstoy of wanton denigration of institutions, such as trials by jury, and slandering the entire judicial system. . . . That Count Tolstoy has something against any attempt to judge is, of course, well known. . . . Nevertheless, the author of *Resurrection* is innocent of actually slandering judicial personnel. . . . Would this be the only way he could slander them if he really wanted to? No, he merely pictures them from their gray, unglamorous, everyday side, with weaknesses such as laziness, a mechanistic attitude toward the performance of their duties, etc., which are characteristic of everybody and not only judges, prosecuting attorneys, and senators. [*PS*, 1:274]

Mikhailovsky offered a subtle psychological analysis of the motives of each protagonist in choosing a path of nonconformity. The stimulus that wrenched each from his routine life was a violent emotional experience: for Nekhliudov it was seeing Maslova in court; for Maslova it was the trial and conviction. After this, however, their paths showed no intrinsic similarity. Nekhliudov had always been a nonconformist at heart:

> The upheaval caused in Nekhliudov's soul by the coincidence of meeting Katia in court . . . is by no means as unexpected and sudden as may appear at first glance. This voice of reason and heart, under whose influence he commits a series of actions that appear strange from the point of view of his milieu, was part of his nature from the earliest youth. For example, that summer when he first saw Katia in the country when she was still living with his aunts, he "was experiencing that exalted state when for the first time in his life a young

> man *becomes aware, not just because someone told him so, but on his own, of the entire beauty and significance of life*. . . . He was one of those people *for whom a sacrifice in the name of some moral demand means the highest spiritual delight.*" [*PS*, 1:274–75]

Nekhliudov had merely been sidetracked into corruption by the ease with which he could indulge in pleasure. Before, and even after, the shock, he struggled with his own peculiar concerns. He actually looked forward to Siberia as a way of shocking some of his friends, a detail that Mikhailovsky found quite autobiographical:

> In the very beginning of the novel he finds his love affair with the wife of the marshal of the nobility, Maria Vasilievna, as well as his equivocal relationskhip with Missy Korchagin, a burden, and he contemplates various ways to end it all in good conscience. The Maslova trial puts the final break on his dealings with that milieu which played such a part in corrupting him. . . . The break is not all that complete, though. He commits a series of acts that are, from the point of view of everybody, quite incongruous: he declares publicly that he feels his guilt before Katia, that he wants to marry that prostitute, . . . wants to give his lands away to his peasants, . . . is going to Siberia. . . . Yet during these outbursts of heroism there awakens in him more than once that other man who is "like everybody." . . . He meets Mariette Czervianski, who arouses his sensuousness, . . . and begins to doubt whether he is, after all, doing the right thing going off like that to Siberia, and giving away his land. . . . In the theater, . . . "as he was looking at Mariette, he enjoyed looking at her, although he knew that she was a liar." He overtook in the street a prostitute who smiled at him in that certain fashion, just like the girl in the theater, and he promptly "experienced that same feeling of attraction and revulsion." [*PS*, 1:276–77]

The case of Maslova was different. She came from an environment of poverty and crime, and her character reflected the different standards of morality and mentality that Tolstoy applied to common people. She was an instinctive type, an animal, and a conformist to begin with. She was displaced from a comfortable niche by Nekhliudov's interference in her affairs, but quickly found a new place in the underworld of pimps and prostitutes. She was ignorant, humble, prejudiced, superstitious, confused, without morals; and for her, prison was not a different environment but a different branch of the same subculture. Her "resurrection" was therefore more difficult.

Mikhailovsky noted Tolstoy's indifference to Maslova's careless morality while he condemned it in women of Nekhliudov's class.

Tolstoy's discussions of her chances of rehabilitation as Nekhliudov's wife ignored Maslova's past history as a prostitute. This double standard resulted from Tolstoy's ideas about moral and intellectual inadequacy in common people, whose unself-conscious disposition he related to a lack of individuality. To him their indiscretions did not matter; they were gregarious animals with only the intuitive features of their character as yet in evidence, not fully developed as thinking people. They needed assistance in developing their intellect, help that he could provide. The background characters in the novel were also treated according to this double standard and were forgiven trespasses that would be found intolerable in more individualized characters. But the significant difference Mikhailovsky saw was that Tolstoy made no effort to save them and seemed quite willing to let them rot in their subhuman predicament. The preferential treatment of Maslova underscored Tolstoy's concern for the peasants as the people chosen to receive his prophecy, as against an Olympian indifference toward the fate of others. This attitude Mikhailovsky found in a religious message lurking beneath the overt religious passages of the book. The rescue of the country girl Maslova was symbolic of the effort to save the peasant, a role that fused in Tolstoy's inconstantly lucid mind with that of Christ as a savior of souls. And, consciously or not, he was bringing familiar religious motifs to the support of this idea. He organized his hero's struggle as an effort to redeem a soul, and furnished the assistance of the nonconformist intellectual Simonson, who was, at least in name, a little like Saint Peter, and Maria Pavlovna, who was a little like the Virgin Mary. Both had Pauline moral standards. Thus, Mikhailovsky concluded that Tolstoy in this new novel was reopening his old battle of wit against intuition, this time as a war in which God's forces of individualism must wrest souls from the devil of animalism and materialist conformity. Some of its shots were fired at Dostoevsky.

Mikhailovsky hinted that, in name and character, Maslova was Tolstoy's response to Sonia Marmeladov of *Crime and Punishment* and, more generally, to Dostoevsky's treatment of the insulted and injured. *Resurrection,* he found, was a covertly polemic work, inspired by *Crime and Punishment*[13] and directed against Dostoevsky's ideas about morality and religion. Tolstoy even tackled one of Dostoevsky's favorite subjects, a laceration of the psyche, something he had never handled before.

There were, Mikhailovsky noted, distinct similarities in plot between the two novels: prostitution under pressure of economic necessity; murder of an unattractive victim, punishment in court, and atonement in Siberia; an innocent self-sacrificing party willing and able to share the hardships of a Siberian sojourn in order to achieve the moral regeneration of a redeemable sinner. Tolstoy had sufficiently reshuffled facts and relationships to arrive at a more believable, down-to-earth plot situation, which was underscored by the choice of the more ordinary name Maslova as a takeoff and improvement upon Sonia Marmeladov's bland, marshmallowy, sentimental image of utter selflessness (the contrast is subtly suggested by a play on words: the name Maslova resembles the Russian *maslo* ["butter"] and represents the more substantial, realistic, perhaps more wholesome character; the name Marmeladov brings to mind *marmelad* ["jam"], a sweeter, more sugary, somewhat unreal person). The differences between the two characters underscored differences in point of view between the two writers.

Tolstoy had shown with Sonia of *War and Peace* that he despised self-denial as a practice that led to a withering of individuality, Mikhailovsky said. Mikhailovsky rejected Lev Shestov's argument[14] that Sonia was a villain coequal with Napoleon because she, too, interfered with the lives of other people. Sonia's main fault was her selflessness. Her meddling was benign and irrelevant. *War and Peace* had other characters who never interfered with anyone or anything and were smoothly integrated with their environment, and yet the author disliked them just as much because they lacked character. The central issue was thus not interference, but its effects upon the individuals concerned. Mikhailovsky had no doubts about Tolstoy's position on interference: it was harmful when it tampered with the formation of character and good if it merely disrupted artificial rules and routines. This was just as obvious from the situations in *Anna Karenina*, where Dolly Oblonsky was made to suffer agonies for her selflessness while her philandering husband Stiva was rewarded for discreetly breaking rules of social decorum with a minimum of intrusion into the lives of others:

> I believe that this, as well as many other things that Mr. Shestov says in his book, is just too arbitrary and rectilinear. Let us remember, for instance, Dolly, who indeed can hardly be said to break any rules, and yet is punished quite unmercifully, whereas her husband

> blithely breaks rules right and left without getting punished in any way whatever. And, indeed, what are those rules for the breaking of which Count Tolstoy avenges and repays? Mr. Shestov counts Vronsky among those who are punished for breaking certain rules, and yet that centaur observes a whole code of precisely defined rules. . . . From the very wording of those rules one can see right away that Count Tolstoy hardly approves of them; on the contrary, he punishes Vronsky for too strict an adherence to those rules. This means that for Count Tolstoy there are rules and other rules, and that there must be rules the breaking of which is desirable or even obligatory from his point of view. [*PS*, 1:269–70]

The real issue was, as always with Tolstoy, whether or not one fulfilled one's obligation to oneself by developing a strong character.

Compared to Sonia Marmeladov, Mikhailovsky said, Maslova's superiority as an individual was revealed through her willful selfishness. For example, her reasons for refusing to marry Nekhliudov were self-serving. Critics who thought those reasons were noble and self-denying were being naive. Maslova was an animal who had been herded into her trade by a sinister conspiracy of encouragement from everybody. She had just endured a frightening process of adjustment to a new fate. She was at last beginning to look forward to a new security in a new corral, in a well-defined function within her old walk of life. She was in no mood to experiment with the untried job of being an individual's wife:

> When preparing to trek to Siberia, Katia did not forget that even out there she would be a needed and important person because, you see, guards and prisoners alike were seeking her favors. . . . This is one of the motives for Katia's rejection of Nekhliudov's offer to marry her. It would seem that the overwhelmingly glamorous status of Nekhliudov's wife would appeal to her vanity, and apparently it did. But on the other hand, out there, in that unknown world of new relationships, she might lose what she already had, her familiar status of one who is desired by and accessible to everyone, and with the sense of shame she might once have had long since dispelled, she was afraid to part with that familiar outlook she shared with everyone. . . . She even treats Nekhliudov for a while like all women of her profession treat all men: she smiles at him as though to give him the "come on," solicits money from him. [*PS*, 1:278]

This attitude contrasted sharply with Sonia Marmeladov's high-flown sentimental plans for devoting her life to Raskolnikov's spiritual regeneration in Siberia.

Mikhailovsky found certain elements in the formation of Maslova's character intriguing—developments that reflected the chronic struggle between Tolstoy's primly virtuous reason and bawdy intuition, his high-minded Logos and his low-minded Eros, what Mikhailovsky chose to call his right and left hands. Previously Tolstoy had never tried to change his peasants because, until recently, he had thought of them as perfect sui generis natural beings whose morality should not be interfered with. Maslova was a new and a somewhat clumsy intellectual experiment designed to demonstrate the growth of consciousness in natural man, under guidance from other, intellectually full-fledged human beings. Tolstoy had not resorted to conventional devices, Mikhailovsky noted, but he did not quite know how to create her as a convincing type, and she was an abstraction, his second homunculus after Karataev, but a much more dextrous, cerebral creation. The intuitive side of her nature was characterized spontaneously, formed by Tolstoy's ever-creative subconscious, which, of course, included his relish of sex. So, she was presented first as an attractive, pert peasant girl, sensuous and amoral. But later she had to be remodeled for her "resurrection" into someone with a prim conscience and a capacity for conscious growth; Tolstoy showed her as having been seduced by Nekhliudov from a state of pristine innocence. As her new self-consciousness began to form, it first took shape as an outraged conscience, a mirror image of Nekhliudov's guilt: once again Tolstoy was projecting his own problems onto others. Because he was inexperienced in the depiction of psychological hurt (*obida*), a feeling with which he was not familiar from his own experience, he depicted the expression of this feeling consciously—with the help of his rational side, clumsily, but effectively, in the intellectual style familiar from his didactic tracts.

> I said that this [fear of change] was only one of the reasons that motivated Katia to refuse Nekhliudov's proposal [of marriage]. Indeed, there are several of them, those motivations. They continuously shift and overlap, sometimes blending into such a contradictory imbroglio that Katia least of all can make out what it is all about. I especially want the reader to pay attention to her emotional distress and her resentful awareness of Nekhliudov's guilt before her. She had already thoroughly forgotten that dismal episode in her youth that laid the foundations for her subsequent sad career, washed it from the slate of her memory with wine and gaudy parties. . . . Her rude, caustic remarks, in her talks with Nekhliudov, appear

> emblazoned upon the general texture of *Resurrection* all the more startlingly because Count Tolstoy has very seldom touched upon such psychological motifs before. We have many times read in his works how he depicts the labored, oppressive workings of an aroused conscience; he has also told us much of this that directly concerns himself, so that in the character of Nekhliudov we do not get anything particularly new, psychologically speaking. But the impelling forces in feeling *legitimately* hurt as the result of a psychological laceration, *rightful wrath*, indignant *righteous* feelings of revenge, have hardly ever been explored by him before. . . . Because these feelings are so crude and undifferentiated, it seems incongruous and implausible that they should be motivated by morality, i.e., a higher source. [*PS*, 1:278]

Mikhailovsky commented only briefly on the actual techniques of Maslova's resurrection, which he found unconvincing, oversimplified, and marred by prejudice. Her rehabilitation as an individual was the result of collective effort. The political prisoners acted as a herd, creating an impression of nonconformist rebellion against society. There was little chance in this atmosphere for Maslova to grow into a satisfactory individual and develop habits of independent thinking. She came immediately under the tutelage of others and was influenced by their thoughts. The leaders of the group, Maria Pavlovna and Simonson, were the bland, angel-like creations of an old man's sentimental fancy and bias against sex:

> It is worth mentioning that the two political prisoners who had the most influence upon Katia's rebirth, Maria Pavlovna and Simonson, are, one might say, practically sexless beings. Both of them have an attitude of utter disdain toward any kind of carnal, physical love, the same kind of disdain Count Tolstoy feels toward it in *The Kreutzer-Sonata* and, of course, in *Resurrection*. He paints the early love between Katia and Nekhliudov, which is free from physical contact, in the brightest colors of which his rich palette is capable and, conversely, paints in the gloomiest colors a love that is physical in nature, a design for which the theme of *Resurrection*, of course, accords ample justification. [*PS*, 1:279–80]

Mikhailovsky believed these to be Tolstoy's attempts to implant religious fantasies in his otherwise realistic work, to camouflage them so cunningly that they were almost unrecognizable in the garb of stark naturalism.

Thus Mikhailovsky's intentions in his criticism of Tolstoy were similar to those of other critics: to guide and groom Tolstoy to be a more satisfactory sage, a better intellectual leader of the Russian

people. For thirty years he bombarded Tolstoy with essays and articles, exhorting and cajoling, trying to make Tolstoy see things his way, suggesting that Tolstoy write on matters Mikhailovsky wanted him to write about, rather than those of Tolstoy's own choice. For that, he felt, he had to free Tolstoy from mysticism and obscurity, which in Mikhailovsky's mind were interchangeable with the ignorance and prejudice he had been fighting in print all his life. Mikhailovsky in the process had acquired considerable psychological skills. His prodigious powers of observation and discrimination, however, as well as his ample critical acumen, have been challenged ever since his rash pronouncements on Dostoevsky, whom he obviously did not like and did not want to understand. His critiques of Tolstoy demonstrate that he was not always conscious in his criticism of his own prejudices. His method was polemical, and in this sense, as well as in other respects, he had some things in common with the civic critics. But he had even more in common with individualist critics such as Herzen, Pisarev, Grigor'ev, Dostoevsky, and Strakhov, with whom he shared a variety of common approaches and expressions. His views tend to glorify the individual who fights encroachment by society upon his identity and inalienable rights. As such, these views are Western, modern, and intrinsically anticommunistic, a fact that should explain Mikhailovsky's unpopularity with the Soviets. Therefore attempts to class his criticism as a forerunner of Soviet party criticism must be dismissed as incorrect.

Unlike Mikhailovsky's deliberately blunt and insensitive assessment of Dostoevsky as merely "a cruel talent," his opinions about Tolstoy reveal considerable subtlety of discernment and an impressive grasp of the nature of Tolstoy's work and positions, except for their metaphysical core, which Mikhailovsky refused to consider and therefore dismissed as fatuous.

Mikhailovsky's point of view, though psychological, was almost exclusively rationalistic. He assessed Tolstoy as an irrational type of person, one whose actions are not based on rational judgment but on sheer intensity of perception. According to Mikhailovsky, Tolstoy's perceptions were directed simply and solely to events as they happen, almost no selection being made by judgment. In this respect Tolstoy had a real advantage over logical people, since objective events both conform to law and are accidental. This contradiction, according to Mikhailovsky, never bothered Tolstoy. In-

sofar as objective events conform to law, Tolstoy accepted them as rational; insofar as they were accidental, they were not rational. Conversely, if an event conformed to law, for Tolstoy it was merely presenting an aspect accessible to reason, whereas if it presented an aspect for which he could find no law, he called it accidental. Thus Tolstoy could postulate universal lawfulness as a postulate of reason that in no sense contradicted his intuitive judgments. Since such an opinion was in no way based on the principle of reason and its axioms, Tolstoy seemed to have a very irrational nature. Yet, even though Tolstoy subordinated judgment to perception, Mikhailovsky was nevertheless quite reluctant to regard him as unreasonable. He preferred to think of Tolstoy as in the highest degree empirical. Tolstoy based himself exclusively on experience—so exclusively that, as a rule, his judgment could not keep pace with experience. But his judgment was nonetheless present: evidently it was intuitive, appearing arbitrarily, and very often quite unexpectedly, as striking judgments and acts of choice; or his judgment would take the form of apparent sophistries, cold-hearted criticisms, or a seemingly calculated choice of persons and situations. These judgments had a rather undiscerning and even primitive characters. Tolstoy could on occasion be astonishingly naive, as well as brusque, arrogant, and even ruthless. Mikhailovsky therefore thought of Tolstoy's character as rationalistic and calculating in the worst sense. But he extended this judgment only to Tolstoy's unconscious attitude, which was, he though, entirely oriented by perception and, because of its irrational nature, quite unintelligible. Indeed, to Mikhailovsky Tolstoy's judgments seemed a hodgepodge of accidental opinions that hardly deserved serious consideration. Tolstoy had, apparently, an equally scornful attitude toward his critic: he considered Mikhailovsky beneath notice, a man only half alive, whose sole aim was to fasten the fetters of reason on everything living and strangle it with judgments.

From Mikhailovsky's standpoint, then, Tolstoy was an inferior kind of rationalist, whenever he allowed his rational judgment to be influenced by his irrational opinions. For what happened to him then was no longer accidental; instead, the accidents that befell him were the result of rational judgments and rational intentions based in irrationality, and these were the things that Tolstoy stumbled over. To Mikhailovsky's rational mind this was something almost unthinkable, but its unthinkableness merely equaled the astonish-

ment of Tolstoy when he came up against someone who put rational ideas above actual and living happenings. To Tolstoy such an approach seemed scarcely credible. Thus there could be no meeting of their minds and no agreement between them.

Mikhailovsky's major weakness as a literary critic was that he almost entirely ignored the artistic element in art and had, in fact, no discernible aesthetic position. Therefore, his essays largely miss their mark as literary critiques because they fail to discuss the intrinsic qualities of a literary work.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Tolstoy's growing fame induced a number of literary and other scholars to write about him and either to disprove or to support with evidence the more extreme assertions about Tolstoy as a phenomenon of Russian life. This was the time when scientific objectivism was enjoying a vogue in Russia, and Emile Zola's scientific theories about the "experimental novel" had produced some spirited literary polemics. Scholarly critics attempted to correlate Tolstoy's personality and environment and develop a theory of the formation of his peculiar personality within his environment, presenting Tolstoy's art as logical synthesis of these elements. The classical philologist, linguist, and editor of the journal the *Messenger of Europe*, D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky (1853–1920), who was the scholarly dean of the Russian literary world during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, published in the *Northern Messenger* between 1894 and 1897 a series of articles on Tolstoy. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky, whose views on literature were largely expressed in Zola's method,[15] divided writers, according to the predominance of either ethos or pathos in their work, into objective and subjective writers, denying literary greatness to the latter on the grounds that, by strongly coloring their output by individual temperament, they made it too personal, individual, and unrepresentative of mankind as a whole. He advanced a theory according to which Tolstoy's talent, like that of Shakespeare, was analytic and nonlyrical. Tolstoy reflected what he saw completely, like a mirror, in images of high definition. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky contrasted this type of talent to that of artist-experimenters such as Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov, whose art was more subjective and lyrical, and relatively low in definition and imagery. Instead of imagery, they relied on rhythmic repetition of meaning and sound, that to which Bakhtin later referred as "symphonic construction." Objective writers thus

could be divided into two subgroups: writers-observers and writer-experimenters. The first created fully developed characters whom they presented with a wealth of concrete detail, fixing them and their environment so well in space and time that their work became something of a chronicle of the times. The writer-experimenter, on the other hand, unlike the writer-observer, reproduced only select aspects of reality. He introduced new ideas that, as an experimenter, he undertook to demonstrate and verify as hypotheses. He started by observing some phenomenon, eliminated some elements, and strengthened others in order to illuminate his concept of, say, one aspect of human nature that tends to be obscured by others in the real world. In concentrating on a single trait of character, he brought it into clear focus and magnified it by examining it in isolation, fixing it in the reader's mind. As a result, this aspect became increasingly clear and distinct, until its meaning dominated the rest. By bringing it into sharp focus, the writer-experimenter revealed what was indistinct in life itself. He introduced in this way one item after another, until its significance as part of the environmental influence was brought to its full term. He thus enhanced reality, as it were, making his protagonists inhabit a controlled, imagined environment. A recognition of the new idea followed when the will of the protagonist modified his surroundings or established a stable balance.[16]

Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky examined Tolstoy's unusual capacity for creating images of extraordinary clarity and plasticity. He made a detailed study of Platon Karataev in *War and Peace* as a character composed entirely of ideas—abstract, general notions about mankind—yet who as a character was very much alive. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky could not offer a rational explanation for this achievement, which seemed to fly in the face of every theory about literature. He suggested that Tolstoy was not only a writer-observer but at the same time a writer-experimenter.

Unlike Shakespeare's protean abilities, Tolstoy's talent was narrowly analytical; Tolstoy had a poorly developed capacity for artistic synthesis, Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky asserted. So, despite the seemingly broad sweep and scope of his art (a compensatory tendency in the artist), his art was "one-sidedly exclusive," i.e., experimental, penetrating, and intensive, rather than extensive, balanced, and inclusive. This could be seen in the relative simplicity of Tolstoyan concepts, which were powerful but limited to a small number of

ideas or phenomena. At the same time, it seemed to be this factor that endowed the Tolstoyan images and concepts with their universality.[17] Repeating what Strakhov said about *War and Peace* (see pp. 99–100), Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky claimed that Tolstoy had selectively brought into relief in his works "all that was stupid and vile in human existence and to which we have become accustomed so that we no longer even perceive it in all its ugliness . . . the mass of vulgarity, stupidity, intellectual and moral darkness that emanates from us and around us."[18] Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky went on to demonstrate that the entire body of Tolstoy's work written since *Anna Karenina* was a brilliant application of the experimental method in literature. "The Death of Ivan Ilych" and *The Kreutzer-Sonata* were both brilliant examples of such writing, which showed that it could be used tendentiously.[19]

The sociologist and literary scholar R. V. Ivanov-Razumnik (1878–1946) also wrote an interesting study of Tolstoy. He had his own explanation of the analytical nature of Tolstoy's art. Ivanov-Razumnik saw the history of Russian literature as a means of tracing the history of the Russian intelligentsia and recording how it influenced the Russian idea.[20] He spoke of Russian intellectuals as spiritual leaders of the people who, confronted with unforeseen difficulties of leadership, ran out of steam and broke up in confusion into many factions simply because they were unable to lead, being no longer sure what to do. In terms reminiscent of the terminology of organic criticism, Ivanov-Razumnik described Tolstoy as standing at the pinnacle of a trend in Russian literature begun by A. S. Pushkin that, after *Anna Karenina*, was becoming stale or "philistine." Using without acknowledgment this[21] and other parts of Apollon Grigor'ev's much-abused statements about certain writers, Ivanov-Razumnik declared both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky to be the decadent products of critical *narodnichestvo*. Both writers, he said, were confused in their intellectual positions. Instead of leading the people toward the future, both were, so to speak, "bobbing about atop the swell" (*mertvaia zyb'*) in the aftermath of the stormy controversy and essentially irreconcilable conflict between individualism and anti-individualsim—civilization and tribalism—in Russian society and national consciousness. Symbolic of this still largely unresolved conflict was the continuing specter of the superfluous man in Russian literature, a character who had no place in a tribal society or a society that was seriously contemplating

a return to tribalism. It was in response to this conflict that Tolstoy's art was so analytical and individualistic, Ivanov-Razumnik claimed. Instead of painting pretty pictures of a future utopia, Tolstoy's art reflected the grim reality of Russian life, which was not concerned with some abstract ideal of future model citizens for whom the critics were clamoring in the press on the assumption that they were needed to help the people adjust to modern times. Tolstoy created characters who already existed in life and Russian society—intense, alienated characters, individualists who were full of doubts and restlessness, always unhappy, always searching for the truth, ready and willing to go anywhere to find it. These were not types at all but actual people taken from life. For proof Ivanov-Razumnik pointed to Tolstoy's characters, all of whom he found to be individuals. Tolstoy had not created a single type.[22] His characters were men and women who were torn between a tendency toward self-reliance, resourcefulness, and enterprise—qualities that were inspired in them by Western influences and education—and an opposite tendency to give these up and revert to communal, archaic patterns of life. The conflict was aggravated by their Russian character, with its natural tendency toward indolence and mysticism, away from action and self-consciousness. The Russian was basically still community oriented, not individualistic. Individualism in a Russian, moreover, was a sign of morbidity, a sign that he had lost his roots. The destruction of the archaic life-style of old tribal Russia after the abolition of serfdom in 1861 had upset many people, causing them to develop morbid psychological tensions whose full effects could not yet be foreseen. In the last part of the nineteenth century some of these effects were becoming apparent in the odd reluctance to part with certain residual tribal patterns in Russian life, such as shared land ownership in the villages. The controversy between Westernizers and Slavophiles tended to fasten onto such subjects, as well as on the pros and cons of a closed village community life (*mir*). Another such indication was the tendency developed by many intellectuals, particularly among the *narodniki*, for "going among the people" in search of guidance, truth, and inspiration: to submit themselves to an ingenuous life style (*oprostit'sia*) and rid themselves of a complex alien culture that made them feel uncomfortable. Those were the questions with which Tolstoyan characters were struggling—problems that reflected the realities of Russian life. The feeling of superflu-

ousness in Russian intellectuals was a lingering symptom of a deep-seated malaise inside the Russian soul: loss of élan vital from an excess of self-consciousness. Such characters were, certainly, negative types. they should not be imitated by anyone. Yet they were true to life, true representatives of the times, Ivanov-Razumnik said. They were average Russians who were trapped in the problems of modernity.

Thus, the tendency among *narodniki* critics was to de-emphasize, or even to refuse to discuss, the mertis of Tolstoy's art, which they deemed to be unconscious and already perfect, and instead to emphasize the still inadequate, in their opinion, intellectual content of his works. Two elements, then, can be said to characterize the position of the *narodniki* on Tolstoy: (1) a rational approach to his art and message; and (2) an avoidance of critical discussion of his art. They also avoided any discussion of the typical, instinctive, "animal" features of his characters, while giving much attention and emphasis to their willful, rational, individual aspects. The rationalism of the *narodniki*, in part, led them to avoid any discussion of Tolstoy's mysticism, which they considered an unfortunate ancillary of his art, to confine discussion to intelligible issues, and to reject or to ignore the rest as merely fanciful. Instead of aesthetics and mysticism, the *narodniki* treated psychology; they sought a sense of moral responsibility for the common man, who needed to be raised to a level of intellectual performance where he, too, could become an individual. The *narodniki* wanted to rescue the mass of people from their animal-like existence in filth and ignorance. Some *narodniki*, along with Mikhailovsky, ascribed this impulse of the Russian intellectual, if he were a nobleman, to a lacerated conscience.

All these subjects were, at one time or another, raised by *narodniki* critics when discussing Tolstoy's works. However, their emphasis on individual psychological problems created for the *narodniki* most of their problems with the Marxists. Because these problems have not been resolved, they have spelled the ruin of the movement's reputation. *Narodnichestvo* was an apparently unsuccessful attempt to improve upon the thorough materialism of the early radicals' concern for merely the physiological and social welfare of the mass of people, and to temper it with concern for their psychological welfare. The *narodniki* subscribed to romantic notions about individualism and the dignity of man that included a number of

fanciful Promethean ideas, however; and these ideas were not acceptable to Marxists, who regarded them as contaminated by too much philosophic idealism. The results of this evidently aberrant trend within the evolution of Russian national consciousness and civilization can be discerned in the ideas of the famed but now unpopular Marxist theoretician Plekhanov (see chap. 7).

Many other scholarly, intellectual, and pseudointellectual studies of Tolstoy, his work, and its meaning for the Russian society and people were published in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. Some were comparative studies of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Others were studies of Tolstoy's message: his philosophy, religion, and ethical views. A favorite method was to compare his performance as a sage to that of other famous Russian and Western prophets. Several comparative studies were also made between the philosophies of Tolstoy and Friedrich Nietzsche.

THE SYMBOLIST CRITICS

The symbolist period (roughly 1880–1910) in Russian criticism and literature is characterized by extreme variation in opinions of Tolstoy. He was adored by some and condemned by others. For some reason, perhaps because no one ever seriously questioned his accomplishments as an artist, his art was not studied too closely by the Russian symbolists. Although the symbolists produced many outstanding artists, writers, and poets who were also fine critics and scholars, they did not produce many serious studies of Tolstoy. Apart from Merezhkovsky's massive study and, to some extent, Andrei Bely's interesting pamphlet, which will be discussed below, the symbolists simply voiced general approval of Tolstoy as a great Russian sage. They wrote short articles on occasions such as his eightieth anniversary and his death, as did Valerii Briusov,[1] or they painted metaphoric tributes like the poet Alexander Blok's comparison of Tolstoy to a sun shining over Russia.[2] His descriptions were often said to be either worthy of a painter's efforts or reminiscent of a particular painter. When a description or visual image was considered too detailed, comparison was made to the Dutch school of painting, because, like the Dutch artists, Tolstoy left nothing for the imagination of the reader to fill in. In fact, some of the judgments were excessively favorable, at least as the merits of the works have been sifted by time. It is noteworthy that the symbolists, unlike almost everyone else on the scene, resisted the temptation to divide

Tolstoy into two parts, one the great artist and the other a poor thinker, which was a popular pastime among civic critics. To the symbolists, the connection between Tolstoy's intuitive artistic and rational intellectual dispositions was real and could not be severed to any meaningful purpose. According to the symbolists, it was the thinker who was largely responsible for the artist, and vice versa. By and large, however, the symbolists estimated the value of Tolstoy, his work, and his personality with methods that left something to be desired and, by today's standards, can hardly be considered accurate or scientific.

The controversial symbolist critic Volynsky (pseudonym of A. L. Flekser [1863–1926]) wrote a highly impressionistic review of Tolstoy's work. He evidently shared Merezhkovsky's opinion that the circumstances of fin-de-siècle Russia were comparable to those of the Italian Renaissance, insofar as they were in both instances the result of change from a tribal to a civilized society and a homogeneous culture. He visualized the modern period in Russia as a time of drastic changes that stimulated vigorous intellectual activity, which would subside when the transition was complete. The Renaissance, beginning with the invention of the printing press, had been such a period in Western Europe; it transformed a slowly developing manuscript culture to a rapidly changing scientific culture. A parallel change had occurred in antiquity, when an oral culture became a literate one in Greece, accompanied by an unprecedented flowering of the arts and intellectual achievement. In Russia both these changes were essentially taking place at once, spelling some dangers for the stability of the national soul. In the course of less than two centuries Russia developed not only from an oral to a literate culture but also to a modern, homogeneous scientific culture. Naturally, the tensions involved in such a process were extraordinary, and, Flekser found, they were reflected in the works of outstanding writers such as Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. But Flekser, although aware of the extraordinary qualities of the intellectual climate in Russia at the time, interpreted them metaphysically, rather than psychologically; he surveyed the time as a period of inexplicable interference by destiny, and Tolstoy as its tool: a focusing device at the crossroads of history, a device in which the phenomenal material and the noumenal ideal substance of reality were being fused into new, meaningful, and profoundly mysterious forces that would continue to shape the destiny of man.[3]

Andrei Bely (pseudonym of Boris Bugaev [1880–1934]) adopted a comparable romantic attitude. He wrote a short article[4] that he then expanded into a pamphlet on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky as the bearers of ill tidings about the approaching end of an era.[5] Like many critics of this unusually subjective period, he was airing his own opinions as much as writing a critique. Primarily, though, Bely was interested in the creative process as such. He interpreted great talent as a cosmic phenomenon, an extraordinary event in the life of a nation and a tragic one in the life of the individual, a fatal process of which both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were the victims. Bely claimed that a genius could be compared to a person hit by lightning, except that his destruction proceeded slowly. A burst of inhuman creative energy passed through him, first running wild (Sturm und Drang), then settling into a flow, finally evaporating as it lost its creative impetus; the poet was maimed in the process. Gogol, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky, Bely suggested, had each been imparied: a madman, an eccentric saint, an epileptic. Being a genius entailed alienation from mankind, for as a poet rose higher it became more difficult for him to communicate his thoughts and fewer people were able to understand him. The populace could see only the external trappings: a maimed, exhausted body and mind. Bely saw creativity as an initially chaotic process that moved in the direction of order and harmony. In this ordering process he held that the poet himself was fully responsible. Thus Bely advocated the Apollonian over the Dionysian principle. Tolstoy he found superior to Dostoevsky; he compared Tolstoy's calm, accomplished images and art to Dostoevsky's imageless art and his predilection for "playing furiously with cacophonies of sound and meaning," which resulted in a tumultuous construction with riotous ugliness (*bezobrazie*). He suspected the latter of being, at least occasionally, wanton and deliberate. Bely, who was scandalized by Dostoevsky's short story about death, "Bobok," interpreted it as a sign of permanent damage to Dostoevsky's character, inflicted by his own genius. By contrast, he called Tolstoy the most outstanding literary phenomenon of the nineteenth century and endorsed his Shakespearean accomplishments and his "efforts to transfix death" with perfection of image and form. Bely's study was, then, more of a general investigation of the creative phenomenon as such. Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were only specific examples of its various manifestations. His pamphlet was not a proper study of the works of

either writer, but his method was typical of symbolist critics of Tolstoy, who preferred to synthesize various subjects and thus produce sweeping and largely unsubstantiated opinions. This method left their criticism deficient in specific arguments.

The poet, scholar, and critic of considerable renown Viacheslav Ivanov (1866–1949) also attempted a symbolist interpretation of Tolstoy's art. He saw Tolstoy's writings as filled with symbolic expressions of a tragic view of life. To Ivanov Tolstoy was a kind of latter-day Socrates, a man with a powerful sense of morality who made his art subservient to his philosophy. This philosophy was extremely difficult to express, and as an artist, Ivanov said, Tolstoy moved gradually to free himself from the shackles of form, a process that took shape as a progressive simplification of language. Ivanov saw in this a parallel to the freeing of the personality from the laws of material reality—necessity and determinism.[6] Ivanov, then, interpreted Tolstoy's development as an artist as a gradual ascent toward a higher reality of spirit, a reality where one could be completely free from all rational limitations such as language and form.

The well-known poet and critic Mikhail Kuzmin (1875–1936) interpreted the formal simplicity of Tolstoy's last works, which were published posthumously,[7] as austerity. He was irritated by Tolstoy's apparent efforts to bring religion into his art, a project Kuzmin found distasteful. He interpreted it as an old man's stubborn desire to have his last word. Evidently Kuzmin did not want Tolstoy to act as a sage and beam his message through his works. He found Tolstoy's posthumously published novelette "Hajji-Murad," an otherwise accomplished work of art, adversely affected by an unwarranted, and therefore artistically improper, *prologos*(vitae)-type introduction. The message of that introduction was that Hajji Murad was a natural man, a near-animal who, though maimed, continued to cling to life tenaciously in the face of hopeless odds and was therefore similar to a roadside bush of burdock that, though repeatedly run over by passing traffic, continued to cling to life. Kuzmin found this message irritatingly ambiguous. He condemned Tolstoy's attempts to tell his readers what to think. Didacticism, he felt, had its place, but should be limited to other forms of expression. He praised in this sense Bely's pamphlet on Tolstoy. The critic S. Adrianov concurred. He also saw "Hajji-Murad" as a condensed version of *War and Peace*, a work with a

strong didactic intent, and Tolstoy's last major effort to preach through literature: his last attempt to restate the message he tried to convey all his life but could never completely express.[8] Adrianov could not say, however, what that message was. And so the efforts to unravel Tolstoy's elusive message continued. The impressionist critic Iulii Aikhenval'd (1872–1928) speculated that the reason that Tolstoy's last works, published posthumously, made such a dead impression was that Tolstoy had been trying to abandon his marvelously vital art in favor of divination (*veshchie vydumki*), yet he could not forget how to write artistic works. As an artist he was cursed with total recall. His last works made the impression of a somewhat dead landscape because his spirit was already elsewhere. Aikhenval'd found Tolstoy's last works to be highly prophetic, filled with an inhuman knowledge of things to come, things that transcended human understanding.[9] In an impressionistically pedestrian critique, A. Gruzinsky maintained that Tolstoy did not himself believe his contention that his incomparable artistic images were inferior to his lifeless message. Gruzinsky ventured a guess that Tolstoy's marvelously transparent images would continue to live long after his opaque message was forgotten.[10] As a rule, then, symbolists and impressionists presented subjective impressions, which they had arrived at inductively by an untraceable method. This resulted in sometimes apparently unwarranted conclusions, drawn in the name of the inspiration, intuition, and artistic sensitivity the critic claimed. They deemed such assertions justified, however. The symbolists presumed that since knowledge of reality, especially its meaningful aspects, was impossible, poetic truth—revelations and symbolic approximations—were the best one could hope for. It was up to the reader to make the effort to understand what the critic was writing about. These assumptions make their critiques of Tolstoy and his work less valuable today.

MEREZHKOVSKY

A noteworthy, though faulty, study of Tolstoy as a man and artist was published at the turn of the century by the celebrated dean of the Russian decadents (the elder generation of the Russian symbolists), Dmitry Sergeevich Merezhkovsky (1866–1941).[11] In three volumes he compared and contrasted Dostoevsky and Tolstoy as men, artists, and religious thinkers (prophets).[12] His study was apparently designed primarily to promote symbolism as a new reli-

gious form of literary expression to replace realism, after its possibilities in Russian literature had been exhausted by the twin geniuses Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.[13] The study, which is considerably slanted in favor of Dostoevsky, was apparently intended to balance appreciation for the two writers in a public who preferred Tolstoy. As criticism of Tolstoy's work, several chapters in the second part of the first volume of the book are especially remarkable. They are devoted to a survey of the formal devices used by Tolstoy. Merezhkovsky's findings in this area have impressed students and critics of Tolstoy. His book was reprinted several times and translated into many languages.[14]

Merezhkovsky was interested in overcoming a resistance to symbolism in the critical establishment.[15] He also sought to enhance and redefine his own role as a critic. He demanded and achieved equal status with the authors whose work he judged, claiming that the creative laws governing critic and writer were the same. Like many symbolists, he was unconcerned with the relative truth of empirical reality; he wanted to probe a reality deeper than that accessible to the senses, one that could be perceived only intuitively. He viewed literature as a tool, an aid to intuition, akin to an "extrasensory crutch." He believed that literature supplied the symbols that bridged the gap between ordinary and extraordinary, sensory and extrasensory (intuitive) experience, and so assisted mankind in its gradual ascent toward higher consciousness. His study of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy was an elaborate demonstration of the operation of this principle and its use by the two writers in their works.

According to Merezhkovsky, both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, whom he imagined to form a kind of syzygy—a synergic team within the collective Russian tribal soul (Dostoevsky as the spiritus and Tolstoy the anima)—had made substantial contributions in this area, each according to his own peculiar talent. Whereas Dostoevsky explored the upper reaches of the psyche, the areas of the mind, Tolstoy had opened the area of psychophysics to consciousness. Until he came along, no other writer had singled out this area of experience for detailed conscious exploration:

> Tolstoy's fame is based on the fact that he was the first to depict—and with what intrepid sincerity!—this vast new, as yet almost unexplored, inexhaustible area toward which our growing self-consciousness is headed, the area of increasing psychophysical sensitivity; and in this sense he can be said to have given us a new body, something like a new vessel for new wine.

> Tolstoy is supreme in depicting this neither physical nor spiritual but psychophysical region—the natural side of man, that side of flesh which is turned toward the spirit, and the side of mind that is turned toward the flesh—that mysterious area in man where the struggle between Beast and God in him takes.place. . . .
>
> Never and nowhere before has this "natural man" appeared so starkly and devastatingly genuine as in the works of Tolstoy: in this respect he has neither rivals nor equals in world literature, not even in any other branch of art in the entire world. [7:166–67]

Tolstoy's descriptions of psychophysical states were so acute that the effect on the reader continued after he had finished reading:

> Putting aside all that is generalized, standard, literary, conventional, artificial, Tolstoy explores in each of the sensations he examines only what is most specific, individual, particular to it, and constitutes its keenest edge; he then whets and sharpens it, hypersensitizes it to morbid acuity, so that the feeling pierces, penetrates like a needle, and we shall never again be able to free ourselves of it: the peculiarities of his manner of experiencing a sensation become forever ours, from then on we feel as he does, not only while we read his works but afterwards, when we return to real life. One may say that the capacity for experiencing sensation of people who have read Tolstoy's works changes, becomes somewhat different from what it was before they read his works. [7:161]

Merezhkovsky, who claimed that significant tensions in the national psyche were being reflected in the works of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and now the symbolists, pleaded for recognition of substantial similarities between Tolstoy's and the symbolists' style. Tolstoy's narrative too consisted of a web of organically interwoven patterns of correspondences and cross-references, held together by contiguity and reinforced by repetition. The result was an astonishingly concrete, tangible impression. Like some kind of god, Tolstoy created his characters in the flesh:

> All these scattered, single features complete and tally with one another, as in beautiful statues the shape of one limb always matches the character of others as, for example [Anna Karenina's] tapering fingers and finely chiseled neck that looks as if it were made of old ivory, the irrepressible sparkle in [her] eyes, her precipitous grace of movement and unruly curls that are forever defying control—all these meticulously drawn individual features are so harmonized that they naturally and spontaneously blend in the reader's imagination into a single, living, unique, separate, individual, unforgettable whole so that when we finish the book we feel as though we had actually seen Anna Karenina with our own eyes, and would recognize her at once should we meet her in person.

> This gift of insight into the body, which he alone possesses to such an extent and which could be called a *clairvoyance of the flesh*, at times, though admittedly relatively seldom, leads Tolstoy into excess. [7:155]

Merezhkovsky, who preferred an element of vagueness in literature, complained that Tolstoy created a narrative of too high a definition. Compared to Pushkin, wh encouraged readers to become involved in the story and contribute their own thoughts, Tolstoy anticipated all the required imaginative effort, stifled curiosity, and risked boredom. The reader was made to see the whole picture. He was overwhelmed with a barrage of concrete detail.[16] The onslaught continued with a rapid fire of repetitions, until the reader was subdued into an attitude of submissive detachment and intellectual passivity (7:152). Tolstoy's language, Merezhkovsky said, was unembellished and avoided drawing attention to itself. Tolstoy used words only for their meaning. He never used poetic devices such as melody and rhythm, and he used elaborate figurative speech rarely (7:162). Ordinarily Tolstoy used simple, commonplace words and expressions that evoked clear, concrete images, such as readily identifiable features and bodily characteristics. He used epithets sparingly and only for a special effect: "His language, usually simple and measured, does not suffer from an excess of epithet. He uses them lavishly only when special features of a given sensation need to be described: 'suddenly he felt a (1) familiar, (2) old, (3) dumb, (4) nagging pain, (5) stubborn, (6) quiet, (7) serious.' Seven adjectives to one noun, and yet there is no overloading, not one of them is superfluous, this is how keenly interested we are in Ivan Ilych's pain to the smallest detail" (7:162). Artistic control was exercised by repeating patterns of similarities and differences. Thematic similarity between passages was suggested by similarities of style. Key words were repeated in unrelated contexts to tie together apparently remote circumstances, or to establish a connection between characters that were far removed in normal life but underwent similar psychophysical experiences. An example was the eerie feeling of anticipatory fear and excitement (conveyed with the key words *strashno* ["gruesome"] and *veselo* ["exciting, merry"]) that seized animals and people alike in the face of physical passion. Their appearance and sensations were described in like terms:

> When Vronsky first sees Anna he is struck by the quality of "race," of "blood" in her appearance. Frou-Frou also had in the highest degree this quality that made one forget all defects: this quality was "blood," "breed," i.e., an aristocratic quality of the body. They both, the horse and the woman, have the same *definitive character*, a bodily presence in which strength and tenderness, refinement and energy are combined. Anna has a small hand "with tapering fingers," a hand that looks "strong" and "tender." The leg bones of Frou-Frou "below the knee seemed no thicker than a finger but were unusually wide if looked at sideways." "Her muscles, bulging underneath a taut, mobile skin, smooth as satin and covered with a net of blood vessels, seemed *hard as a rock*. . . . Her whole bearing, and especially of her head, conveyed a *definitive, energetic, and yet tender impression*." They both have the same precipitous lightness and sureness, an almost winged quality of movement and at the same time a much too passionate, suspenseful and defiant, stormy, orgiastic abundance of vital energy. The lean head of Frou-Frou has slightly protruding sparkling, merry eyes (Anna too has "sparkling and merry" eyes) and widens at the mouth into flaring nostrils with "a thin membrane between them that seems filled with blood." Like Anna, she understands her master "without a word being spoken." . . . [We are told how] "she took a deep breath . . . nimbly changing her feet" (Anna, too, has a "nimble gait"). . . . The words "chiseled," "thin," "strong" are used in the same sense in describing the appearance of both Anna and Frou-Frou. [7:196–97]

Merezhkovsky was the first to draw attention to this remarkable similarity in the descriptions of Anna Karenina and the horse Frou-Frou. He claimed that Tolstoy was at his best in depicting the physical frame of animal and man. The external bodily feature became a window for seeing inside a character. The method was spectacularly successful as a method of building characters, whom Tolstoy literally sculpted verbally. Merezhkovsky differentiated between two methods of characterization in Tolstoy's works. By one method he developed a salient feature so as to reveal the inner character. By the other he built the character by adding feature on feature until a complex, multifaceted personality emerged (7:153). Repetition was essential to both methods. In the first, synecdochic method, one or more select features were singled out and repeated, until whenever the character was mentioned, one recalled the feature and the inner identity it signified. Merezhkovsky cited outstanding examples of this technique in *War and Peace*, such as the upper lip of Lise, the petite wife of Prince Andrei: "Thanks to these reiterations and repetitions of one and the same bodily characteris-

tic first in the living, then in the dead, then again on the face of her statue and, finally, in the face of her son, the 'short upper lip' of the little princess is etched permanently on our memory, remains imbedded in it with ineffaceable clarity, so that we cannot even remember the little princess without also recalling the image of her slightly raised upper lip with just a shade of dark fluff on it" (7:146). Merezhkovsky cited other examples: the heavy gait and softly radiant eyes of Prince Andrei's sister, Mary, who blushed in patches; the thinness and fragility of Vereshchagin, the innocent victim of mob violence; and a number of others. In each instance, the inner being was revealed, sometimes in a flash, through an external, apparently trivial but actually profoundly typical bodily feature. The feature symbolized the character, and literally acquired a new dimension through repetition. Merezhkovsky explained the effectiveness of the method by stating that Tolstoy noticed what others had overlooked, and the common trait became uncomon. Merezhkovsky pointed out, however, that these intrinsically potent features could be unduly enhanced if they were mentioned too often. By repetition the trait would take on an independent existence, detach itself from the concrete character, and live its own life somewhat in the manner of Gogol:

> Speransky has these "pudgy white hands," in the description of which Tolstoy plainly somewhat abuses his favorite device of repetition and emphasis. . . . It would seem that the feature has been mentioned enough: no matter how absentminded the reader, he will never again forget that Speransky has white, pudgy hands. But the artist is not satisfied: a few more scenes and, with dogged persistence, the same detail crops up again. . . . Eventually, this white hand begins to haunt one like an apparition: as though it had detached itself from the rest of the body—just like the short upper lip of the little princess—and acts on its own, lives its own, separate, strange, almost supernatural life as if it were a fantastic creature like Gogol's "Nose." [7:152]

Such odd side efects demonstrated that the success of repetition required careful judgment in its application, and showed that Tolstoy's judgment was not always reliable in this respect.

Merezhkovsky further explained that such repeated features could fail to achieve their intended effect. Some features required additional persuasive development and failed without it. For example, the pudginess of the hands of people in power was used by Tolstoy to suggest the corruption of their owner. Kutuzov's obesity was another of these bodily features that Tolstoy used to

suggest much more than just a physical characteristic. The same point could be made about the mysterious roundness of Platon Karataev, a truly sweeping and vague abstraction (7:149–50). The mysterious qualities of this trait were evident in the reference to the mandala of God in the dream of overweight Pierre, a floating sphere he thought was a symbol of life and matter. The abstract nature of the image allowed for little referential, but ample connotative, potential. It generated an endless flow of speculative imagery of puzzling ambiguity and vexing ambivalence. Its meaning, which probably included the meaning of the name Tolstoy (fat man), was never explained. In Karataev it carried a suggestion of self-satisfied acquiescence in spiritual perfection. In Napoleon, however, plumpness of body suggested, on the contrary, smugness and grossness of spirit. Many other characters, good and bad, were affected by roundness in a vaguely disturbing, mysterious fashion. Anna Karenina, whose erect posture was said to be an index of a passionate animal nature, had rounded arms and a pleasing fullness of body, combined with delicately rounded small hands and tapered fingers. Roundness underscored her blood ties to her promiscuous brother Stiva, who was pleasantly rotund, but had a light gait and animal vigor. But other, less specific similarities failed to produce sufficiently clear referential connotations. According to Merezhkovsky, the reason for the failure of some of these features was that the physical was too removed from the metaphysical world. The connection had to be established with either intellectual (logical) or psychic (mythological) aids. The failure demonstrated that weak or sketchy similarity, even if reinforced through repetition, was not enough to bring together thoroughly unrelated phenomena. Repetition could rediffuse associative thought patterns and encourage speculations about the supernatural where anything was possible. Tolstoyan metaphyics was generally characterized by such referential weakness. This weakness was at the heart of the failure of Tolstoy's technique in all areas except psychophysics. Only there the technique of instant identification worked well because he could draw on the storehouse of concrete, familiar concepts, memories of instantly identifiable emotional experiences and sensory impressions that were all related to the body and shared by everyone, regardless of background or education.

Merezhkovsky outlined the wider implications of the window technique, still confining them within the area of psychophysics. Somehow the flat hair on the head of Ivan Ilych, pasted to his skull,

suggested rigor mortis and the terminal nature of his disease ("The Death of Ivan Ilych"). On the other hand, Anna Karenina's unruly little curls revealed health and an abundance of life and animal energy. Tolstoy was particularly successful in depicting the language of gesture, which in his handling became a plastic symbol of complex emotion. Claiming that gesture was by its very nature several times as expressive as words, Merezhkovsky cited a number of examples from Tolstoy's works that described particularly expressive gestures: the "screaming" silence of the branch pushed by the falling tree in the conclusion of Tolstoy's early short story "Three Deaths"; the recalcitrant scream of the anonymous little child in *Childhood* who had come to see the dead mistress and became conscious of death for the first time; the look of submission to fate in the face of the captured mature wolf (*War and Peace*); the image of the dead merchant Brekhunov ("Master and Man"), as he was lifted off Nikita, his carcass frozen stiff in spread-eagle position, dramatizing the animal nature of his mortal remains. Some gestures or their equivalents suggested considerable complexity in preceding, accompanying, or subsequent experiences. Kutuzov's long-healed wound (*War and Peace*) answered Prince Andrei's silent question and complex scruples and Kutuzov's moral right to send others into mortal combat. Expressive also was the manner in which the surgeon held his bloodied cigar after hours of surgery on the wounded in battle (7:158). Another example was Natasha's reluctantly returning, then suddenly flashing, smile, which symbolized for Pierre the return of happiness at long last. More ambivalent, but still effective, Merezhkovsky found, were gestures involving simple moral decisions, such as, for example, the embarrassed smiles on the faces of participants in the sinister ritualized project to trick Pierre into proposing to Hélène (*War and Peace*). Because of greater affinity between people on the psychophysical than on the intellectual level, everyone knew what the smiles were all about, whereas at least Pierre was at sea about the meaning and purpose of the accompanying disjointed and banal formal conversation. As always with Tolstoy, his characters' speech was less meaningful than their gestures (7:195).

Merezhkovsky offered an ingenious analysis of what he termed Tolstoy's magical powers of illusion—his ability to elicit powerful emotions with unusual combinations of words. Tolstoy would inject these word combinations into the midground, as it were, between

the reader's memory and senses—his imagination—arouse it, and so induce simultaneous resonance in both those adjacent areas, thus triggering an emotion:

> When we learn that Ivan Ilych cried out three days in pain "Ooo! Oooooo! Oo!" because having started to scream "I don't want toooo!" he never stopped and just continued to scream, it is easy for us not only to imagine but actually to feel in our bones this dreadful transition from human speech to a senseless animal howl. We know it not only consciously, through thought and imagination, but actually, through instinctive recall of previous bodily experience, which translates itself into an actual bodily sensation . . . [just as] a silent string begins to vibrate in response to a ringing one. The animal soul of the reader, his motoric sensory apparatus, becomes stimulated by his own body that winces, shrinks involuntarily, like an animal, in imitation of the body of the described character. The reader thus is some sense "enters" the body of the character, becomes, as it were, "transubstantiated." [7:158]

Another example of this sort of verbal legerdemain was the detailed dissection of the distraught reveries of Ivan Ilych on his deathbed. The stark contrast between the idyllic nature of his distant childhood memories and the grim present startled the reader into recalling similar, if unrelated, experiences of his own and triggered an imaginary sensation—jangled his nerves into feeling empathetic pain (7:163). The vividness or magic, the startling quality of the experience, depended on an element of strong surprise achieved by the juxtapositon of disparate ingredients. Adding a new twist, an unusual ingredient, combining familiar but dissimilar and unrelated experiences, Tolstoy startled the reader and threw his responses into confusion as to whether he was having actual or imaginary experiences. The mild sense of confusion produced a sensation of magic if the experience was colorful and vivid enough. A weak example of such a charming, magical experience within *War and Peace* itself was the kiss between Sonia and Nikolai Rostov, which they remembered for the rest of their lives because of an unexpected and therefore exciting ingredient that was added to their kiss—the smell of burnt cork from her painted mustache. So, obviously, Tolstoy was manipulating his characters as he was his readers. The trick was to achieve the correct proportion between dull known and exciting unknown ingredients, balancing the impression between recognition and surprise, yet avoiding too much surprise that would interfere with recognition and cause too much confusion.

Merezhkovsky maintained that a modicum of trickery was clearly involved in the very successful manipulation of sensations with which Tolstoy could not have any firsthand acquintance. Such experiences were made to look indubitably genuine because of a deliberately high proportion of thoroughly familiar, comonplace detail. For example, Tolstoy skillfully reconstructed the vain, feverish sensations of a sixteen-year-old (Natasha Rostov) going to her first ball (in *War and Peace*), and the tinge of imaginary pain in the breasts of an exhausted mother (Dolly) as she thought of another pregnancy (in *Anna Karenina*). There seemed to be no limit to Tolstoy's ingenuity in this respect. He even put routine human thoughts and feelings into the heads of intelligent animals. For example, he described the joy of Levin's dog Laska which, on seeing her master, became dampened by the uncomfortable feeling of looking into his "always strange" human eyes; and the vexation of a female charger, ready to gallop away and chafing at the bit, when, startled by a sudden command into increased consciousness, she is thrown into confusion by the unfamiliar problem of needing to reach a now conscious decision of which of her four legs to put forward first. All such incidents greatly contributed to the vividness and verisimilitude of the narrative. The strange element rode in on the commonplace. Success depended on the twist being startling enough, strong enough, to revitalize a commonplace experience without offending against credibility.

Yet the same method, Merezhkovsky found, could prove inadequate in conveying more individualized experience, although it continued to be dramatically effective. He imputed such failure to a lack of readily identifiable referents. Such was the case whenever Tolstoy tied together real and imaginary detail, whenever he tried to merge dreams and reality or place identical experiences in an environment of mixed real and fantastic nature such as daydreams, incidences of unusually high parallelism, or incredibly frequent coincidences. The effort was sometimes quite successful (12:232). At other times, Merezhkovsky pointed out, this dramatically effective technique failed. In any case, passages constructed along such lines invariably acquired a fantastic coloring, sometimes without increasing the plausibility of the fantastic element itself. Attempts to do so by adding more and more repetitive realistic detail only made the experience surrealistic, i.e., more concrete, without making it any more natural. They simply added a theatrical touch, as in

the series of incidents that culminated in Anna's destruction (12:232–35). An impressive array of coincidences in *Anna Karenina*, Merezhkovsky said, did not increase the realism of her experience, even though it was described with realistic detail, persistently repeated. Repetition merely added plasicity to a fantastically combined image of flesh, blood, fire, iron, and loud noise, presided over by an ugly chthonic deity who presumably symbolized the "iron laws of necessity" to which human beings were subject (12:236–37). Merezhkovsky found the image contrived but admitted that it effectively dramatized Tolstoy's idea. Still, persistent recurrence of the same image in other works by Tolstoy, from the earliest to the latest, suggested that he was having difficulties in evolving credible imagery to express unusual circumstances—his peculiar views about stock situations of a metaphysical nature. Elsewhere he apparently tried to express them with stylistic means:

> When the dying Ivan Ilych "is being stuffed into a black, narrow bag," at first he is unable to get right into it. But then, "suddenly some force shoved him in the chest and side, making it still harder to breathe, and he fell through the hole and there at the end of the hole he saw a light. . . ." In exactly the same way Anna, when she wanted "to rise up, back away from the carriage wheels," was suddenly "seized by an implacable something that shoved her in the head and grabbed her by the back." "God, forgive me all," says Anna. "Forgo" instead of "forgive" says Ivan Ilych. "Let me go past your judgment!" prays also Dmitry Karamazov: "Without judgment," past judgment, past the iron law of vengeance and repayment. When Anna "fell through the hole," when the candle "went out" forever, then maybe for her too, just as it did for Ivan Ilych, "there, at the end of the hole, was light"—and it was no longer dim candlelight but a new, nondeclining, unblinking light. Maybe for her too, "instead of death there was light." Maybe she also said to herself "Where is it? What death? There was no fear because there was no death." [12:237]
>
> God be merciful, "forgive, help me!" prays Levin, too, before Kitty goes into labor. [12:242]

Merezhkovsky granted that perhaps there were reasons for some of the verbal development that transcended his understanding, since Dostoevsky too used similar words, but he judged the overall attempt as unsuccessful. Repetition implied at least a partial failure to achieve the desired effect. Moreover, the effectiveness of Tolstoy's narrative fell off dramatically as soon as he left the familiar grounds of psychophysical experience. Outside of

psychophysics, little could be understood of the author's references or message. Eventually the reader was stranded in contemplation of the lone, godlike figure of the author looming up behind an increasingly abstract, sterile background of unfamiliar empty rhetoric and awkward narrative.

In a significant part of his argument with Tolstoy, Merezhkovsky attempted to show that Tolstoy's fault lay in ignoring familiar literary and cultural conventions. His indignation with Tolstoy's renunciation of them was rooted in the symbolist view of literature as an extrasensory crutch, a form of walking stick one needed to understand unusual experiences that did not originate in either the author's or the reader's personal experience but came from within—tribal memories, archaic visions, and other experiences of an intuitive type, especially those of a frightening, chaotic kind. The symbolists were of the opinion that mankind, in the course of its gradual ascent toward higher, more differentiated consciousness (which was a necessary historic development), underwent arcane experiences for which there was no explanation and which therefore could not be accommodated by individual man in his personal consciousness unless and until he could identify them with something familiar. He needed a label, a characterization that would steer and integrate these puzzling experiences into his own consciousness. Folklore and literature supplied ample characterizations of this type in the form of conventional symbols and myths. This idea, later elaborated by the Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung, appears related to Plato's concept of life as a never-ending process of retracing eternal ideas (Jungian archetypes). The human individual could participate to the extent of undergoing recurrent variants of experience until its meaning cleared in his mind, giving it a new dimension—wisdom. However, the symbolists conceived of an ingenious shortcut upon this somewhat laborious and occasionally dangerous direct process of acquiring unusual perspicacity. They had a system that allowed them to forgo direct experience and the dangers of actual confrontation with reality by undertking theoretical labors in writing. Their solution probably rests on the age-old magic belief that ideas are the equivalents of things, a notion that in modern times identifies actuality with theory, reality with fiction, a thing with its name, so that if one can name a thing, one knows it and controls it. The symbolists, in any case, tried to implement their theory by weaving complex and recurrent patterns of words

with references on all four levels of language—sound, meaning, morphology, and syntax—in hopes of hitting upon a magic formula in which a sudden burst of productive thought associations would reveal some new aspect of the enigma of man. In this way they hoped to increase their wisdom and control over reality with relative ease. One of their schemes was to belabor old symbols in new combinations, trying to revitalize the denotative potential that had been sapped by overuse. In a word, they hoped to produce new formulations that would illumine for them the chaos of unlived by imagined experience—possibilities that they felt existed in the realm of art. Exploring the function of writing itself, rather than message, characterization, or plot, thus became the symbolist writer's purpose. He relied on the creative inspiration of the unconscious and the existence of a hidden intellectual code that controlled language formation. Merezhkovsky insisted that every writer should engage in this magical process. He claimed that those who, like Tolstoy, scorned it were thereby reduced to mediocrity, insofar as they could handle only the concrete, everyday, phenomenological aspects of life. Attempts by such writers to enter the higher reaches of noumenal experience were doomed to failure if they did not have at their fingertips recognizable symbols of such experience, as supplied by folklore, myth, and other forms of literary convention.

It is thus easy to see why Merezhkovsky divided Tolstoy's writings into two kinds, and why he claimed to have discovered two different styles in Tolstoy's fiction. One was a taut, effective style for describing nature and natural man. Anything pertaining to culture was, on the other hand, weak, diffuse, awkward, and inept. Merezhkovsky insisted that "even on superficial reading of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* one is struck by the presence of two styles of writing, two languages, two currents of speech, running together in close proximity but never mixing, like oil and water" (7:179). The clumsiness of Tolstoy's intellectual style bore witness to his inability to formulate his thoughts without help from the conventional formulas of literary expression or, as Merezhkovsky put it, to gather his wits in areas of scant referential support. The confusion was reflected in the loss of syntactic cohesion and, on occasion, a downright faulty grammar (7:180–81).

Apparently Merezhkovsky's criticism of Tolstoy's style was grounded in a desire to promote symbolism. His objections to

Tolstoy's disrespectful treatment of the noumenal world of metaphysics, as against his admiration for Tolstoy's skill in handling the phenomenal world of physics and psychophysics, were formal. They reflected his vexation at Tolstoy's refusal to employ literary formulas that he could, if he wished, alter and twist to his heart's content, but that, Merezhkovsky thought, were legitimate tools of the literary trade and should be used. Merezhkovsky charged that Tolstoy lacked artistically adequate means to mark out and identify the genuinely magical side of experience, and he thus failed to reveal anything about his own considerable intuitive ability to penetrate this area of reality, withholding the benefits of his genius. When dealing with matters metaphysical, Tolstoy merely increased the quantity of his images (contrast) at the expense of logic (similarity), aiming for startling results, regardless of the quality of the result. Out of a misguided and whimsical desire for boorish originality, Tolstoy did not use the excellent symbolic language of conventions and myths; he thought of such words as artificial. Tolstoy was a savage who never learned to appreciate the beauty of artifice, just as he could never appreciate the boundary between nature and culture, Merezhkovsky claimed (7:177–78).

Ignoring the huge reservoir of symbols available to him in literary convention, Tolstoy operated with crude self-made approximations that could not begin to comprehend the entire range of intellectual experience. Merezhkovsky listed some of the images that he thought Tolstoy used especially often to depict the noumenal side of existence. He found Tolstoy's favorite image to be the hole. Tolstoy pictured birth and death as experiences of passing in and out of the womb of eternity through a narrow hole, where pain and suffering either ceased or began. He depicted the experience itself as rather rude, painful, and undignified, like being pushed unceremoniously through a long thin dark (black) bag. Sometimes he added candlelight. A character's resistance to fate and the ordeal was expressed by animal howls, more or less controlled, depending on the temperament and degree of maturity the character had attained. There were silently mature figures, for example, the tree in "Three Deaths," Karataev and the mature (*materoi*) wolf in *War and Peace*, and Anna and Frou-Frou in *Anna Karenina*; immature whimperers, such as the lady in "Three Deaths," Lise and Anatole in *War and Peace*, Levin (at the birth of his son) and his brother Nikolai (*Anna Karenina*), and Pozdnyshev's wife (*The Kreutzer-*

Sonata); and then infantile howlers, such as the little child who saw death for the first time in *Childhood*, both Kitty and her baby during delivery (*Anna Karenina*), Ivan Ilych ("The Death of Ivan Ilych"), soldiers, and pigs, lambs, and sundry other animals, big and small, slaughtered in various works of fiction and nonfiction by Tolstoy. Finally, Tolstoy showed a response to death that was a meretricious demand for a "prettified version" to suit the taste of the applicant. It was, essentially, a childish attempt to defeat reality by suggesting an "alternate route to heaven," a trip to Rome (the "celestial city" that for Tolstoy epitomized artifice). This was advanced at the last minute by self-centered, self-enamored women who had been so corrupted by vanity and greed that they also wanted more than one husband. With this favorite method of condemning artifice, Tolstoy depicted the deaths of the lady in "Three Deaths," Hélène Kuragin of *War and Peace*, Anna Karenina, and Pozdnyshev's wife (*The Kreutzer-Sonata*).

Merezhkovsky assumed that Tolstoy thought of artifice as a malignant growth on the society of man and a corruption of reality (7:110). Tolstoy, he said, liked to draw sketches of men ruined morally and physically by soft living. Merezhkovsky was irritated that Tolstoy persisted in nudging the reader to notice the decrepit physique of an anonymous colonel on parade, the broad pelvises of service personnel, cab drivers in *War and Peace*, and Tartar waiters in *Anna Karenina*. Tolstoy's bias against culture was obvious from his dislike of Saint Petersburg (7:263). Nevertheless, a great writer without culture, Merezhkovsky said, could not be a great man of letters. The absence of culture from his works made his art one-sided, as Turgenev had pointed out. There was no opposition between man and nature in Tolstoy's works. He wanted to deal only with man's elemental nature. He refused, for example, to accommodate the stylistic conventions of the age he depicted. As a result, Merezhkovsky said, repeating Leont'ev's argument (see p. 75 above), *War and Peace* read like a contemporary novel:

> In reading *War and Peace* it is very difficult to get rid of the hardly surprising yet, come to think of it, rather astonishing impression that the events depicted, despite their familiar historic form, took place only yesterday. All the described characters, despite their sharp, portraitlike quality, are our contemporaries. The reader needs a continuous effort of imagination and memory, especially where the action is transferred from the scene of world affairs into private, family, inner life, not to forget that it occurs between the fifth and

> fifteenth year, and not the sixth and seventh decade of the past century, that he, the reader, is separated from these persons and events by a historic abyss of almost a whole century, and what a century!—one that is equal to two to three centuries in less turbulent historical epochs. The air we breathe in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* is the same air; the smell of history in both these epics is the same: here as there one finds the same, to us utterly familiar, atmosphere of the second half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the similarity is not so much in the external shape of events as in their inner shadings of historical "coloring"; ask yourself, is there an significant difference between Austerlitz, Borodino, and the battles in the "Sebastopol stories"? Apart from a few historic names, almost all the details of the first can be so easily transferred to the second, and from these to the first. What is described is not a battle with the peculiarities of a certain historic epoch but a battle in *general*. Between the Freemasonry of Pierre Bezukhov and the *narodnik* activities of Levin, between the family life in the house of Rostov and in the house of Shcherbatsky, there is just as little difference in historical coloring as elsewhere. People who were born and raised in the fifties and seventies of the eighteenth century on Derzhavin, Sumarokov, Novikov, Voltaire, Diderot, and Helvetius not only speak our contemporary idiom but think and feel as we, in terms of the newest, latest, most private feelings that seem to have been "born" to us just yesterday and have not yet been fictionalized by anyone—our very own feelings and thoughts. It is almost impossible to imagine Prince Andrei, with his pitilessly sharp, cold, and precise, already overrefined, already quite morbid, *so very much our own* sensibilities as a contemporary of [N. M. Karamzin's] "Poor Liza." . . . Levin does not have a single religious doubt that might be in any way whatever incomprehensible to Pierre Bezukhov. They are not only spiritual twins but of the same age, historical contemporaries. Their entire external cultural shell, their whole costume and *personality* in the broadest sense of the word "persona" is that of persons of our own period and times. [7:169–70]

Turgenev was correct, Merezhkovsky found, in saying that there was no historical flavor to *War and Peace*. Austerlitz and Borodino were shown to have caused barely a ripple on the surface of Russian life and were soon drowned out by the people's daily concerns.

Merezhkovsky then explained the serious nature of the artistic flaws that resulted from Tolstoy's insistence on depicting only the natural side of man. He suggested that Tolstoy perhaps exaggerated the physical character of man because he could not understand the intellectual side of man and did not have the skill to express it. Tolstoy's heroes functioned on lower levels of consciousnesss; they were passive victims of animal emotions, incapa-

ble of a rational approach to life. Many were crude, unthinking animals like Nikolai Rostov. Some of his most successful, accomplished characters were intuitive animals like Natasha Rostov, who "did not deign to be clever," or Daddy Eroshka of *The Cossacks*, Tolstoy's most perfect creation, whose name suggested that he was the living embodiment of the god Eros, thought Merezhkovsky, Eros being the prime mover behind everything psychophysical. Every one of Tolstoy's sturdy characters had a touch of the wild animal in him (7:205).

Merezhkovsky thought that a significant effect of Tolstoy's failure to give characters human individualities was that none of them could really communicate with words (7:195). Merezhkovsky found that they all chatted in the style of the author, but their meaningful communications all came by gesture, mimicry, and inarticulate sound (7:232).

Furthermore, Merezhkovsky contended that anyone who scorned cultural conventions eventually surrendered to an intellectually limited outlook. He explained that, so far as he could see, Tolstoy's brilliant and successful technique of making windows into the souls of his characters did not allow him to peek inside their minds. As a result, they failed to develop a mental profile. Whatever individuality they possessed was merely a deviation from the physical norm for the species, like the horse Frou-Frou, whose measurements were at variance with the requirements for racehorses. Intellectually there was no room for growth in Tolstoy's characters. After a brief and unproductive period of struggle to develop a human personality, their spirit gave up, bowing to their animal nature, the only real nature they ever had. Mind and body were always mismatched in Tolstoy's characters. the subhuman, orgiastic, chthonic world of Tolstoy was symbolied by the collective image of soldiers frolicking in and out of a waterhole while a sickened Prince Andrei looked on (*War and Peace*). In this oppressive atmosphere of unconscious animal carnality, the individual intellect felt lost, was always either sickly or unreal. Merezhkovsky maintained that Tolstoy could only write about the commonplace. He insinuated that

> in the works of Tolstoy there are no characters, no personalities, not even protagonists but merely contemplative, passive, suffering people; there are no heroes, only species—*victims*, who do not struggle or resist but let themselves be carried by the onrushing stream of

> elemental animal life. Occasionally someone pops his head up above the surface to appear as a human face but is almost immediately swallowed up by the elements, sinking and drowning in them again, this time forever.
>
> Therefore there is no tragedy. Everywhere isolated tragic *nodi* are tied; but, not being resolved in human individuality, they pass once more into oblivion by joining the impersonal, the material, objective, unreasoning realm, that which is will-less and nonhuman; there is also none of that unifying resolution that the ancients called a *catastrophe*. In the ocean of that shoreless epos everything is agitated, moves like flashes of the rays of sun on the surface of waves, everything is born, lives, and dies, and is born again, without end and without beginning. [7:204]

In his argument Merezhkovsky employed some typical symbolist images, some of which were warmed-over Gnostic notions, such as the concept of an absent God (*Deus absconditus*), and the world as a cosmic crypt under an oppressive, laden sky:

> And as there is no redeeming terror, so there can be no redeeming laughter. Not once, reading the works of Tolstoy, is one moved not only to laugh, but even to smile. As though there were a heavy, cloudless but oppressive, low "brazen" sky above that holds everything down below, so that in the end the heart contracts from misery and there seems nothing to breathe, there is no air. . . .
>
> Even Turgenev remarked on this sensation of crampedness in the works of Tolstoy, a kind of lack of outlet into the upper reaches, freedom, fresh air, spirit, spirituality. He tried to explain this defect by a lack of "enlightenment." But would not lack of "consciousness" be a better word? [7:204–5]

Apparently Tolstoy felt no sense of loss in the transaction; he willingly abandoned the distinction between man and animal and used the same terminology to describe both. Vronsky impressed one as a stallion, Frou-Frou as a woman; Anna Karenina and Pozdnyshev's wife were both described as though they were horses. The same dour look of silent, eloquent reproach was stamped in the faces of all newly born, dead, or dying, be they animal or man. In mortal anguish all reverted to animal sounds. Attempts to rise above the animal were punished by death: men, robbed of their last dignity, were reduced to animal poses, like the body of Brekhunov in "Master and Man." Like Circe Tolstoy changed men into swine. The Homeric laughter of the author accompanied the destruction of the divine image in man and the annihilation of the human personality. Tolstoy was a philistine:

> On the very summit of his work, one of the greatest edifices ever raised by men, the creator of *War and Peace* erects this cynical banner—"a diaper with a yellow stain"—as the guiding standard of mankind.
>
> . . . It is this total disappearance, this swallowing up of all individual human faces in that which is faceless and nonhuman, that is one of the dominant *motifs* of the Tolstoyan creative impulse. [7:192–93]

Perhaps the most significant casualty of this approach, Merezhkovsky said, was Napoleon, who was depicted as a villainous, moronic fool; Tolstoy completely failed to appreciate Napoleon's personality, his sinister grandeur, and saw him only from the philistine vantage point of the shrewd but ignorant orderly Lavrushka (*War and Peace*). The failure could be measured most clearly in matters metaphysical. Tolstoy's own thought was not the flight of a soaring spirit like that of Leonardo da Vinci, whose modern counterpart Merezhkovsky thought Tolstoy to be (with Dostoevsky being Michelangelo's), but a suspension in limbo: a chronic morbid fear of death, void, and darkness, with no signs of life beyond the grave (7:177). Tolstoy's efforts to resurrect himself were like those of the physically rotting dead in N. V. Gogol's gothic novelette "The Terrible Vengeance"—nightmarish attempts to rise above the grave while being much too firmly tied to the ground for any such attempt to succeed. Tolstoy, Merezhkovsky thought, should have burned *Resurrection* as Gogol had burned the *Dead Souls II*.

Merezhkovsky regarded *Anna Karenina* as Tolstoy's greatest and most poetic novel, in which he almost succeeded in rising above the intellectual limitations of his philistine outlook:

> *Anna Karenina* as an accomplished artistic whole is the most thoroughly artistic of all of Tostoy's works. In *War and Peace* he, perhaps, set out to accomplish even more but did not succeed. And we have seen that one of the main protagonists there, Napoleon, turned out to be totally unsuccessful as a character. In *Anna Karenina* everything or almost everything was accomplished successfully; here, and only here, did Tolstoy's artistic genius reach its pinnacle, full and complete self-control, the ultimate balance between design and execution. And if he ever was stronger elsewhere, then, certainly, he was never more perfect, neither before, nor afterwards. [12:203]

Merezhkovsky's demonstration of the merits of the book, however, was rather peculiar. He saw it as a study in the dynamics of passion resulting from an excess of psychophysical energy, where false

Christian standards brought about tragic results. For Merezhkovsky conventional Christianity had betrayed man's genuinely dual nature by debasing and denying the sancitity of flesh. He dismissed the ostensible meaning of "Vengeance is mine . . ." as superficial, and he saw *Anna Karenina* as an unconscious attempt by Tolstoy's erotic genius to assert that flesh was equally sacrosanct with the spirit. He saw the alchemy of the book as a kind of apocatastasis, a restoration of man's initial state in an eschatological situation. Loving two husbands, one in the flesh, the other in spirit, Anna was moving toward establishing a new identity in a state of "consecrated flesh." For Merezhkovsky this was the essence of Anna's individuation. The initial stages of the process were sound: a liberation through passion, a psychological process of development in which the original propensity to wholeness almost became a reality and a conscious event. But it was thwarted by her false ideas about a Christian transformation. These ideas, Merezhkovsky assumed, were superimposed by Tolstoy, whose Christianity was always inimical to the artistic core of his work and came from the peculiarities of his own personality (7:40–41).

In the rest of Merezhkovsky's book he advanced his own form of religion, with the help of much material from Dostoevsky's works. In this achievement he has remained without imitators. Although he leans on the critical practices of others, as a critic he stands alone even among symbolists. His method was rooted in the assumption that truth as such, as an absolute, was unknowable. He therefore operated wth so-called relative truth, which, for him, apparently meant anything that was stated often enough. In the process, however, Merezhkovsky severely strained his own system by demonstrating his conviction that his own opinion, once it was repeated often and persistently enough in a variety of startling contexts, acquired the ring of oracular truth even without foundation in empirically observable fact. His penchant for raising everything he said to a verbal ritual and his reliance on a system of puns and anagrams to enhance his themes further defeated his purpose. His addiction to antithesis and his clearly mechanical attempts to resolve complex and irrational phenomena into simple sets of opposites were so strained and artificial as to border on the grotesque. All too often his neatly constructed, meticulously balanced word and sound patterns revealed an intent to arrange the fabric of the writer's work to accommodate Merezhkovsky's own extremely in-

volved religious and philosophic scheme. He was evidently influenced by Friedrich Nietzsche, elements of whose *Birth of Tragedy* (1872) he tried to incorporate into his own argument. The outcome was a series of remarkable distortions that produced a gallery of fanciful caricatures of Tolstoy's, and sometimes Dostoevsky's, characters and ideas. In addition, he tried to resuscitate many metaphysical concepts that in the course of the past two and one-half thousand years had become obsolete and meaningless and that he, believing them to have some residual potential meaning, tried to electrify in recurrent patterns and new uses. Consequently, in about half of his writing no one but a classical philologist or a theologian could understand what he was saying. Yet after one clears away the fog, what remains does not have much substance and is not new. Merezhkovsky attempted the Rosicrucian solution: the union of Dionysus and Christ, rose and cross. The attempt leaves one cold. As a religious prophet in his own right, Merezhkovsky emerges as little more than a purveyor of used spiritual goods and spurious concepts: a mystic philosopher in the Nietzschean mold yet without Nietzsche's genius, full of rhetoric and infected with the germ of racist arrogance that characterized the later phenomenon of German Nazism. Only his formal analysis of Tolstoy's artistic devices is relatively free from such contamination. That it became obscured by the rest is unfortunate, because parts of the study are valuable. His study anticipates a good deal of the work done by the Russian formalists, as well as work done in the twentieth century on the psychological causes of the creative impulse. It mentions a number of things that have yet to be fully discussed within the realm of literary criticism and belong, at present, within the disciplines of psychology and anthropology. Merezhkovsky's idea, for example, that the tension between linear logical and circular symbolic thinking provides psychic potential for creativity is well worth further study. He believed that it endowed Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, like the Renaissance man in Europe, with an unusual spirit of enterprise and an enviable enthusiasm that European writers no longer possess. His discussions of this interesting idea, however, are diffuse and generally inadequate.

THE MARXIST CRITICS

Some evaluations of Tolstoy by avowed Marxists were touched also with impressionism. Heavily impressionistic criticism marked, for example, the somewhat naïvely old-fashioned comparative study of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky by the physician-writer Vikentii V. Veresaev [Smidovich] (1867–1945), who thought of himself as a Marxist maintaining a belief in intuition. His arguments reflect a strong undercurrent of the organicism that, as Terras has shown, underlies a good portion of Marxist thought.[1] Veresaev, well known in his day for his very popular naturalistic stories about the seamy side of life and for his own case work as a physician, exuberantly praised the "life-asserting" message of Tolstoy's works and condemned the morbid message of Dostoevsky's works. In accord with his own scheme of things and as he saw them arranged in Tolstoy's works, Veresaev divided Tolstoyan characters into two types—those who lived by the rules of reason, that is, approaching things analytically and, therefore, theoretically, and those who synthesized experience. The latter were the ones who were truly alive, responding intuitively to "living life" (a term he borrowed from Dostoevsky), without being preoccupied with dissecting or analyzing their experience. Reason and logic, Veresaev opined, were a dead side of man. He found in Tolstoy's works many people who were dead or dying from an excess of logic, which had led them to arrange their lives according to a pattern, rigid habits, and a pref-

erence for routine. Among the living characters he found Natasha Rostov and Pierre; among the dead was Speransky, the perfect logician (*War and Peace*). Sergei Ivanovich Koznyshev and Varenka of *Anna Karenina* were both on their way toward living death. They were already too weakened by their own reasonableness and the logic of a well-regulated life to respond to the vagaries of "living" love. Veresaev noted the custom of nonverbal communication among the dead and dying characters, who seemed to prefer sign language to words; apparently they were regressing to animal levels of consciousness. He commented on the hypocrisy and gross insensitivity to the needs of the people that were displayed by those who offered organized charity in *Resurrection*. He also made a number of clinical observations on the necrosis of society, some of which were more cute than acute. He claimed, for example, that the physical love between the Pozdnyshev couple in *The Kreutzer-Sonata* was love between corpses. He referred to "The Death of Ivan Ilych" and *Resurrection* as stories in which hordes of cadaverous characters led lifeless lives and the protagonists were trying to escape the same fate at the eleventh hour. Finally, Veresaev claimed that the value of Tolstoy's works was in their ability to convey the feeling for real life as opposed to sham life—the mere semblance of living practiced by so much of society; on reading Tolstoy's works one felt disgust for those who exchanged living life for the creature comforts and mere appearances of a dead life without real feelings—a practice, Veresaev claimed, that led people to regression into patterns of unconscious life and vegetation. In this sense Veresaev found Tolstoy's works edifying. They taught people how to live correctly by showing the incorrect ways of living in modern society.[2]

A lengthy but less original impressionistic study of Tolstoy by the Marxist sympathizer V. P. Kranikhfel'd (1865–1918) also deserves mention. Kranikhfel'd, who practiced a sociological form of literary criticism, stressed the connection of a writer to his own social background. He referred to Tolstoy as "the parting gift of the landed gentry to Russia." Tolstoy, Kranikhfel'd said, was constitutionally unable to understand the middle class. He wrote only about the nobility and the peasants. Comparing Tolstoy with Dostoevsky, Kranikhfel'd noted that each of them saw the peasant from a different and rather subjective angle. For Tolstoy the peasant was real: a benign natural man, healthy, friendly, joyous and round,

symbolized by Platon Karataev as a kind of roly-poly, jolly character. For Dostoevsky the peasant was the "insulted and injured" member of society: the suffering, underprivileged wretch who was directly beneath him on the social scale. Therefore, whereas Tolstoy was able to feel sympathetic and at ease with the peasant, like a true aristocrat Dostoevsky could feel only a suppressed hostility masked in charity. Taking his cue from the symbolists, Kranikhfel'd rejected the image of Tolstoy created by Mikhailovsky as "a two-faced Janus, with one face sanctimoniously directed toward heaven, the other toward earth and sin." Kranikhfel'd insisted that Tolstoy was whole, and that his worth resided in his contradictions. Therefore no meaningful division of Tolstoy into an artist and thinker was possible. Nor were the other labels that scholarly writers always tried to pin on him correct. Tolstoy's character was like life itself—contradictory, containing both the positive and the negative aspects of man and uniting the opposites. In one of his more interesting observations Kranikhfel'd insisted that, strictly speaking, there never was such a thing as a Tolstoyan doctrine, a statement that agreed with Tolstoy's own repeatedly stated views. According to Kranikhfel'd, bookish and abstract writers had maligned Tolstoy because they could not understand him. They could not understand anything unless and until they put a label on it. Tolstoy, however, never invented any doctrine; everything he wrote, Kranikhfel'd said, was autobiographical, and there was almost no fiction in his works in the sense of invention. Everything was recorded as it was; he represented the truth, tentatively, with only slight modifications such as the names of characters in *War and Peace*, which were easily recognized as names of real families of the Russian nobility with one or two letters changed or transposed. *War and Peace*, Kranikhfel'd claimed, was Tolstoy's best work. It had no unity of theme or plot and no plan, only a unity of the author's mood. Taking his cue from R. V. Ivanov-Razumnik, Kranikhfel'd stressed the absence of types in Tolstoy's works. Tolstoyan characters were individuals, copied from life and thoroughly alive. Even if they did have certain unifying features, these would be something like the roundness of Platon Karataev. Repeating Merezhkovsky's point, Kranikfel'd said roundness seemed to crop up with the most diverse of characters such as Napoleon, Stiva Oblonsky, Kutuzov, and Anna Karenina. Then echoing D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky, Kranikhfel'd said that perhaps Karataev

was an exception to the absence of types in Tolstoy's works, for he was devoid of personal characteristics and made up only of typical features; thus he was a real prototype of the Russian peasant, in the most general sense of the word, whose thoughts were the collective thoughts of the entire peasant class. All other Tolstoyan characters, however, were thoroughly individualized and, in this sense, like Tolstoy himself—imperfect, human, undefined, and free to develop. According to Kranikhfel'd, Tolstoyan characters were also fleeing from themselves. A good example was Pierre Bezukhov of *War and Peace*, who would rather face the hostile outside world than look inside himsef. He could only do that when he was either exhilarated or intoxicated. Tolstoyan characters, Kranikhfel'd observed, reflected man as he really was, weak and imperfect, not as he would like to be, i.e., they were not really model characters at all. For Kranikhfel'd this was the real value of Tolstoy's works. One could learn from them about man's real nature. In this way Tolstoy's works served an important edifying purpose.[3]

Critiques of Tolstoy and his works by the writer Maksim Gorky (pseudonym of Aleksei Maksimovich Peshkov, 1868–1936), a sincere but unorthodox Marxist, paralleled those of Lenin and offered, on the whole, commonplaces. Gorky described Tolstoy as a documenter of Russian life for the preceding six decades. Conspicuously excluding Dostoevsky from his list of Russia's literary great, he named Pushkin and Tolstoy as the greatest. He praised Tolstoy for accurately reflecting Russian life but derided his religion as an anachronism—a rank corruption of "the Russian national prejudice" and thus a residue of Russian tribalism rooted in paganism and developed in centuries of ignorance and oppression.[4] Gorky's personal reminiscences of Tolstoy[5] are, on the other hand, impressionistic and excellent. His observations are keen, professional, and unmatched in their insight into Tolstoy's astonishingly complex mature personality. Gorky admitted that he could not quite fathom Tolstoy, who struck him as the archetypal trickster and a slightly sinister variant of a tribal sage—a cunning old Russian sorcerer and miracle worker (*kudesnik*). Gorky believed that there was a good deal of hypocrisy in Tolstoy's moral positions and had serious reservations about Tolstoy's "grotesquely oversized personality" (*nepomerno razrosshaiasia lichnost'*) which he held responsible for Tolstoy's firm conviction that he had earned for himself the right to remain immortal in the flesh. Contrary to the

opinion expressed by most commentators, Gorky did not believe that Tolstoy lacked the capacity for logical thinking. He thought, on the contrary, that Tolstoy had an unusually logical, even pedantic, mind. This made him at once dogmatic and erratic. He always drew his conclusions on the basis of observable evidence, Gorky said, without allowing any speculative abstractions or ideas to interfere. It was this dependence on concrete evidence, however, that made his intellectual position less stable. New evidence could, for instance, completely change his mind and make him reverse himself. Gorky claimed that it was this peculiarity of Tolstoy's mind that was responsible for most of his weird and spectacularly wrong prejudices and myopic views, which could be, on occasion, extremely irritating. Gorky's observations on Tolstoy are, to date, probably the best single source of biographical evidence about him.

Another borderline Marxist, the *narodnik* Evgenii Andreevich Solov'ev (1863–1905), known at the time under various pseudonyms (Andreevich, Skriba, and others), wrote several articles and a monograph on Tolstoy.[6] He regarded Tolstoy as a fighter for human rights and individualism (a critical stance for which he is ignored by the Soviets). He discussed the effectiveness and simplicity of Tolstoy's style, and *Resurrection* as a strident expression of social criticism. In 1908 Petr B. Struve (1870–1944), whose Marxist affiliations were never firm, wrote a series of sociological critiques of Tolstoy, arguing from positions fairly close to those of Plekhanov (see below): he challenged Tolstoy's intellectual positions, questioned his significance as a social phenomenon, and suspected that his religion, as an evolution from what he believed to have been originally pantheism to rigorous Christian asceticism and rejection of nature worship, was never quite genuine.[7] The Marxist educator N. N. Iordansky (1863–1941) characterized Tolstoy as a social thinker and tried to present him as an apostle of social revolution in spite of himself: despite Tolstoy's rejection of socialism, what he did write effectively rocked the establishment, thereby hastening the coming of the revolution.[8] Iordansky's position here was somewhat exceptional, insofar as it approaches that promulgated by Lenin in opposition to Plekhanov's then very popular views.

It is an undeniable historic fact that orthodox Marxists right up to the Russian revolution, i.e., before the views of Lenin prevailed, heartily disliked Tolstoy for his ideological recalcitrance. The early

Marxist N. V. Shelgunov (1824–91) believed that Tolstoy held himself deliberately aloof from issues and harsh realities of life and blithely indulged in a self-serving justification of the status quo as perceived by the privileged classes. Shelgunov primly referred to *War and Peace* as a series of motley scenes about the life of the privileged classes, of artistic merit but trivial. Pierre Bezukhov was to him the uncouth spokesman of Tolstoy's disorderly philosophy of life, a philosophy that was raw and undigested, consisting of parts of Slavophile doctrine, aristocratic frivolity, hypocrisy, and nonsense. Shelgunov also rejected Tolstoy's philosophy of history as too impersonal; he was offended by a total absence of intelligent design in Tolstoy's conception of history, which Shelgunov found to be anarchic and described as "collective fatalism."[9] Qualitatively apart from the rest of orthodox Marxist criticism of Tolstoy before the revolution are the outstanding scholarly studies of his work and philosophy by Liubov I. Axelrod-Orthodox (1868–1946), who was awarded her Ph.D. in Germany for her dissertation on the correlations between Tolstoy's ethics and poetics.[10] Her influence on the views of Plekhanov and other erudite Marxists is unmistakable. She defined Tolstoy's weltanschauung as religious idealism and, as such, inimical to Marxist thought. In detailed analyses of Tolstoy's works she arrived at the conclusion that religion was central to Tolstoy's art and, therefore, could not be isolated from it. Her views were, thus, directly opposed to the views of Lenin. She described Tolstoy as a metaphysical romantic who held a tragic Promethean view of man. This vision was reflected in his dual view of the world as in a cracked mirror. The split was visible in the duality of many of Tolstoy's characters who were the projections of his own tragic self. The duality was caused by Tolstoy's inability to reconcile individualism with the realities of life.[11]

A negative attitude toward Tolstoy as a prophet (a political figure and social phenomenon) thus prevailed among Marxists right up to the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, demonstrating once more that in matters political, such as sociological criticism, opinions are often a matter of the fortunes of war. Leon Trotsky [Bronstein] (1877–1940), another learned Marxist in the orthodox mold, wrote a brief but colorless obituary on the occasion of Tolstoy's death, commenting on his significance as an old-world phenomenon about to be buried, but he judiciously refrained from making any rash predictions about his future value to the Marxist cause.[12] A. S. Dolinin,

later a prominent Soviet scholar, briefly and perfunctorily examined the impact of certain negative experiences on Tolstoy's outlook.[13] It was only after the Russian revolution that A. Lunacharsky (1875–1933) made a serious scholarly effort to reinterpret Tolstoy in the light of Lenin's articles about Tolstoy. Before the revolution the point of view represented by Plekhanov prevailed among Marxists. Detailed discussion of both these points of view follows.

Two eminent Marxists, Plekhanov and Lenin, each wrote a series of articles about Tolstoy. The unflagging homage paid to everything Lenin ever wrote makes it impossible to understimate the importance of his articles on Tolstoy for Soviet literary scholarship. It has also removed from the limelight Plekhanov's similar but essentially more erudite contribution. The two sets of articles were initially written as a polemic exchange between the two leaders of Russian Marxism who were vying for the ideological control of the Communist movement in the area of culture. These articles show that the Bolshevik Lenin, a revolutionary radical, found Tolstoy to be much more acceptable to the Marxist cause than did the Menshevik Plekhanov, a more moderate, traditionally intellectual evolutionist. Eventually political events gave the victory to Lenin, but initially it was Plekhanov who won battles because he took a more orthodox, liberal rational approach.

PLEKHANOV

A prominent émigré Marxist theoretician, historian, philosopher, literary critic, and leading spirit of the *II Internationale*, Georgii V. Plekhanov (1857–1918) probably contributed more than any other theorist to the formation of Marxist aesthetics. His views were inseparable from his political convictions. He was the originator of the "theory of labor" in aesthetics (see his series of "Letters without an Address," written between 1899 and 1900). In the war of ideas against capitalism, he looked for new standards in art to consolidate the ideological positions of the working class in their resistance to the decadent forces of modernism (discussed in his "Proletarian Movement and Bourgeois Art" [1905] and "Art and Social Life" [1912–13]). He worked out a system of aesthetic judgments whereby the value of a literary work would be assessed according to the sociological merits of the views and opinions expressed in it by the author and his characters. He called this criterion of judgment

a "sociological equivalent." Plekhanov expanded Chernyshevsky's concept of utilitarian art (*poleznoe iskusstvo*) to include message (*ideinost'*). His principal premise for judging value in any work of art thus consisted of three basic criteria: utility, simplicity, and important message that had social value. His other premise for passing judgment on a work of art was whether its execution corresponded to its design, so that the author accomplished what he had set out to do. The Soviets now think that this premise was a mistake that led to separation of form and content and ultimately resulted in the development of formalism.

Plekhanov wrote six articles about Tolstoy[14] to combat what he thought was a growing trend among Marxists to equate Tolstoy's teachings with those of Marx. This was a period of intense struggle for definition of Marxist goals. Concerned about signs of undue growth of Tolstoy's popularity among liberal Marxists, Plekhanov felt it incumbent upon himself to define exactly the extent of Tolstoy's usefulness to the Marxist cause. Plekhanov, whose final evaluation of writers rested on their attitude toward the class struggle, tried to show that the great artist Tolstoy was a very poor thinker who was quite remote from reality, had wrong ideas, had never read Marx, and was therefore hardly in a position to be a good sage or "teacher of life."

Plekhanov's disagreements with Tolstoy were ideological in nature. Some of these concerned the highly controversial and volatile issue of the origins and purpose of art. In the first "Letter without an Address" (1899), Plekhanov challenged Tolstoy's recent (1898) definition of art in *What Is Art?* as a mode of communicating feelings through symbols. Plekhanov thought it one-sided and inadequate; he claimed that the definition should also include the communication of thoughts. Thought stabilized artistic expression by giving it direction. It also made art into a social phenomenon. Unlike ordinary speech, Plekhanov said, art transmitted thoughts and feelings with living images, rather than logic and abstract thought, which, he assumed, belonged outside the realm of art:

> According to Count Tolstoy, art expresses the *feelings* of people, whereas words express their *thoughts*. This is inaccurate. The word serves people not only as a means of expressing their thoughts but *also* their feelings. Proof of this lies in *poetry* the medium of which is indeed *the word*. . . .
>
> It is also inaccurate to say that art expresses *only* the feelings of people. No, it expresses their feelings as well as their *thoughts*, but it

> expresses them not *in abstracto* but *as living images*. And this is its most salient characteristic. In Count Tolstoy's opinion, "art begins when man, aiming to convey to others a feeling that he himself experienced, stimulates it in himself again and tries to express it with certain external signs." But I think that art begins when man recalls feelings and *thoughts* he experienced under the influence of the surrounding reality and gives them a certain expression through images. It is self-evident that in a vast majority of instances he does so aiming to convey what he thought and felt *to other people*. Art is a social phenomenon.[15]

So Plekhanov declared that Tolstoy's latest definition of art excluded thoughts and images. It will be clear later in this chapter what this pedantic point has to do with Plekhanov's conviction that great ideas uplifted and ennobled even poor and mediocre art, whereas poor or trivial ideas reduced even great art to insignificance. On this point, it will be noted, Plekhanov is quite close not only to Pisarev but to Tolstoy's own positions on how to judge value in a work of art. Their disagreement stems from differences in opinion on what constitutes great ideas.

Plekhanov could not abide Tolstoy's religious ideas. He felt that Tolstoy's art was ruined by them. His attitude toward Tolstoy was therefore ambivalent. He acknowledged grudgingly that Tolstoy was a great Russian writer. Plekhanov felt that his writings could and should have been of colossal significance to Russia and the world. He therefore could not forgive Tolstoy for squandering his great talent on unworthy causes. Most sources minimize Plekhanov's bitter resentment of Tolstoy as a man.[16] Yet nearly all of his utterances about Tolstoy seethe with an ill-concealed irritation. Plekhanov thought that Tolstoy's influence on young writers was excessive, even if it was preferable to that of the decadents (2:437, 440). His reluctant admission of excellence in Tolstoy was nearly always accompanied by a sour note. His articles abound in sarcastic references to Tolstoy as a "star of the first magnitude," "our great," "our famous novelist," a rich, educated count, and "our remarkable [*zamechatel'nyi*] artist." But he was disinclined to discuss the details. His stiffness and mockery of Tolstoy contrast oddly with his warm praise and expansive treatment of the mediocre civic poetry of Nekrasov, whose often trite and pretentious lines Plekhanov lauded for their lofty civic sentiment ("N. A. Nekrasov" and "Pokhorony N. A. Nekrasova," 2:187–209), and his glowing account of Chernyshevsky's dismal novel *What Is to Be*

Done? ("O romane Chernyshevskogo *Chto delat'*?," 2:192) for the right ideas they contained. Plekhanov hinted that the amorous involvements of Chernyshevsky's feminist heroine Vera Pavlovna were much more meaningful than the frivolous philanderings (*buduarnye pokhozhdeniia*) of Tolstoy's heroes and heroines (2:176–78). In what seems to have been pique at Lenin, Plekhanov wrote in 1917 that Nekrasov and Chernyshevsky, and not Tolstoy, were the true sages of the period between 1860 and 1895: they saw history with the eyes of the *raznochintsy*, not the nobility (2:192).

There can be doubt that an unsatisfactory message would ruin Plekhanov's enjoyment of a literary work no matter how excellent the form in which it was expressed. And, so far as Plekhanov was concerned, Tolstoy's poor ideas spoiled his art. Plekhanov sometimes preferred not to refer to Tolstoy as a great artist or a genius, but called him merely a sizable (*krupnyi*) talent (2:436). Plekhanov's reluctance even to discuss the details of Tolstoy's art and his inclination to treat it as spontaneous or as neutral reality are exemplified in his long quote from *War and Peace* about the girl Malasha and Field Marshal Kutuzov at the war council. He ignored the vividness of the scene and its artistic merits and concentrated on the similarity between the little girl and his own political opponents, whom he likened to her in intelligence. He said that an alert, naïve observer will notice little things but will miss bigger issues. He advised his opponents to outgrow the psychological level of a child (*pererasti psikhologiiu rebenka*) ("Devochka Malasha," 2:451–52).

With a certain amount of malicious glee, Plekhanov referred to Tolstoy as a "chronicler of nests of gentlefolk" and, rather testily, declared that he, like any enlightened, progressive Russian, could accept Tolstoy only up to a point. He could only bring himself to appreciate Tolstoy, and at that fitfully, when in his writing he depicted unsatisfactory social conditions:

> And from "where" to "where" do the people of this second category appreciate Tolstoy?
>
> The question is easy to answer. People of this second category value in Tolstoy a writer who, although he never did understand the struggle to restructure social relationships because he remained completely indifferent to it, nevertheless felt deeply the unsatisfactory nature of the present social structure. But mainly they value in him a writer who used his huge artistic talent in order to depict this unsatisfactory nature, however sporadically, or rather, occasionally, he may have actually done so.

> This is from "where" to "where" do the really progressive people of our times appreciate Tolstoy. [P. 336]

Plekhanov primly refused to grant Russian writers of gentle birth any status higher than that of chroniclers of their times. They were writers without a valid message, mere clerks of history. He accused Tolstoy, along with other outstanding Russian writers with an aristocratic background, of unconscious bias and a retrograde tendency to promote the cause of the nobility. This tendentiousness he found revealed in a predilection to depict the life of the nobility in an appealing light (*v privlekatel'nom svete*):

> [Count Tolstoy was] a chronicler of the life and mores of "nests of gentlefolk," . . . an interpreter of the mental and emotional states of their inhabitants, just as were Pushkin, Lermontov, and many, many other stars of lesser magnitude. In calling them all chroniclers of nests of gentlefolk, pointing out their intrinsically genteel point of view, I do not in the least want to imply that they were bigoted supporters of class privileges, heartless defenders of the exploitation of the peasant by the nobleman. Of course not! These people were in their own way very kind and humane, and many a nobleman sharply condemned the overburdening of peasants—at least sometimes—some of them did. But this is not at all the point. The point is that no matter how kind and humane our great artists may have been, it is nevertheless quite clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that in their works the life of the gentlefolk is depicted not from its negative side, that is, the side from which the conflict of interests of the nobility with those of the peasantry would be revealed, but from a side from which this *conflict is completely unnoticeable*. . . . I will remind the reader of the joys of Christmastide at the country estate of the counts Rostov *Otradnoe*, in the district of Ryazan [in *War and Peace*]; servants from among the serfs participate alongside their masters in those joys which were depicted for us with such incomparable, inimitable skill. In painting the *Otradnoe* idyll Tolstoy did not in the least try to conceal anything, spruce it up or brighten it up. As a matter of fact, he never even thought of the *Otradnoe* serfs. His attention was concentrated on the depiction of the love of Nikolai Rostov for Sofia, and the involvement of serfs in the joys of Christmastide was depicted by him entirely in passing, and merely because it was impossible for him not to depict it: the picture would have been less than true to life otherwise. And if the pictures of these manorial daily pursuits painted by him turned out to be a genuine idyll, then this is neither the fault nor the achievement of the artist. He could not help it if such idyllic scenes did indeed take place amidst all the horrors of serfdom. [2:190–91]

By contrast, Plekhanov said, Nekrasov depicted the same way of life in sharply negative colors, and it was thus that the heroic mili-

> Not only was Count Tolstoy a scion of our aristocracy; for a long time he was also the promoter of its ideology, although admittedly not in every respect. Even though the life of our landed gentry is depicted in his brilliant novels without undue idealization, it is nevertheless depicted there from its best side. Its revolting side, the exploitation of the peasants by the landowners, appears not to have existed for Tolstoy. In this is revealed the very peculiar and at the same time invincible conservatism of our great artist. And this conservatism, in turn, is responsible for the fact that even after Tolstoy finally did turn his attention to the negative side in the life of the nobility and began to condemn it on moral grounds, he nevertheless continued to pay attention to the exploiters, not the exploited ones. Whosoever fails to take due note of that will never reach a correct understanding of his morality and religion. [P. 370]

Plekhanov claimed that, for the most part of his life, Tolstoy remained indifferent to the plight of the lower classes, whom he refused to know other than as Platon Karataev. He cared only for their moral, not social, improvement.

Plekhanov insisted that there was an organic connection between Tolstoy's art and his religious ideas. The most vivid and appealing scenes in his works since *Childhood* and throughout *War and Peace* served to promote faulty religious concepts, which eventually evolved into his notorious theory of nonresistance. In emphasizing the indivisibility of Tolstoy's art and religion, Plekhanov spoke not of social determinism but of a pernicious psychological condition that tended to involve both author and reader. Plekhanov's major intellectual project was to counter the effects of Tolstoy's teachings, and these were powerfully reinforced by his art. He said that confusion about Tolstoy's role as "a great teacher of life" arose because Tolstoy's great formal skill lent strength and persuasion to his distorted ideas. The reader, always astounded at the unmistakable quality of genius in Tolstoy's works, and feeling that great art always carried great ideas, naturally assumed that Tolstoy's ideas were great. However, although rapture with Tolstoy's great art was legitimate, it should not be extended to his ideas because they were all wrong, and eventually they had thoroughly corrupted his great art. Plekhanov set out to explain in detail what had happened, as, he said, was his duty as a critic and a lover of Tolstoy's great art. Integral to the problem was Tolstoy's sinister theory of nonresistance. The theory, he said, "had been buzzing in Tolstoy's head for quite a long time. In 1861 [the equine protagonist of] his [story about the horse] 'Kholstomer' explained in a similar fashion the

[proprietary] meaning of the word *mine* etc. . . . One can see from this, by the way, that Tolstoy was only partially right when he spoke of a *conversion*, which he said he experienced in the beginning of the 1880s. There was a change in his mood, yes, but his ideas remained the same" (p. 357). These ideas could be traced through all of Tolstoy's works, from the already mentioned example in *My Confession* to the earliest. "His teachings about morality have remained purely negative: 'do not get angry; do not fornicate; do not swear; do not make war. This, for me, is the essence of the teachings of Christ.' And this negative morality was, in its onesidedness, far below the positive moral doctrine that evolved among people who were first and foremost concerned with the 'happiness of the people and the improvement of their lot' [Nekrasov's famous phrase]" (pp. 335–36). Rooted in class consciousness, Tolstoy's nonresistance theory promoted a notion of religion and a state of mind that could be described only as a state of reduced consciousness. Plekhanov, who knew pleasure to be the enlightened materialist's goal in life, thought of conventional religion as a harmful soporific that dulled consciousness with pious phrases and a futile ritual. It was used by the establishment to keep the people in an abject and unenlightened state so that they would demand less than their fair share of pleasure in life. Tolstoy voluntarily inflicted the same condition upon himself. He was a disappointed, naive materialist who had turned to religious idealism and asceticism after he had failed to find satisfaction and pleasure in a normal life of selfish, social, and political concerns. Christianity conflicted with his nature. Plekhanov, who thought of an enlightened religion as a set of rules and morality as a code to regulate human conduct, found that Tolstoy's four other[17] rules of negative morality insulted intelligence and caused depression and feelings of futility. In denying pleasure as a goal in life, Tolstoy was denying life itself. It was after Tolstoy had emptied his mind of normal human concerns that the vacuum became filled with the fog of his infantile faith:

> Concern about personal happiness does not satisfy Tolstoy, concern about the welfare of the people does not have any appeal for him ("what do I care?"). The result is psychological emptiness that indeed denies all possibility of life. It is imperative that the emptiness be filled with something. But with what? Either with concern about personal welfare or concern about the welfare of the people or, ultimately, both. But we have seen that concern about personal welfare did not satisfy Tolstoy, concern about the welfare of the people

> did not appeal to him; therefore nothing could come from a combination of these two concerns but zero. And this means that neither in personal nor in social life was there anything that could fill that nagging emptiness in the soul of our great artist. How could he help then but turn away from the earth toward heaven, that is, start looking up to "someone else's will" for the urgently needed answer to the question "why do I live?" Here lies the solution to the riddle of why Tolstoy did not himself notice the untenable nature of his infantile beliefs. [P. 334]

Plekhanov did not question Tolstoy's artistic accomplishments, but he devoted no interest to them because he thought of them as intuitive or unconscious. He referred to Tolstoy somewhat contemptuously as a genius who could make reality live in his works but could not himself live in reality, or find any real meaning in life. Plekhanov disagreed with Mikhailovsky that Tolstoy was a repentant nobleman. Having found no real meaning in life, Tolstoy became wrapped up in himself and turned to religion.

These later conscious attempts to bring religion into art resulted in hypocrisy, Plekhanov explained. To illustrate, he contrasted Tolstoy's and Chernyshevsky's theories of art, which were erroneously thought similar, he said, because their theories were poles apart on the issues that good art should promote. Tolstoy and Chernyshevsky agreed that good art should explain the meaning of life, but they disagreed on what that meaning was. Chernyshevsky was a materialist who accepted life, appreciated the physical beauty of its forms, and saw its meaning in concrete terms of social issues. Tolstoy was a convert to religious idealism who now looked for the meaning of life beyond a life in the flesh, which he repudiated; he hoped to find such a meaning in religious abstractions. A conflict was inevitable once he tried to implement his view of life with concrete, living images of art, unless he did so spontaneously and unconsciously, as he had before his conversion. As soon as he tried to express consciously this truly irreconcilable conflict between imageless abstractions and concrete images, lies and distortions resulted. Moreover, to express his conversion, Tolstoy had to realign drastically all his preferences. If he repudiated the artistic purpose of promoting the joys of life and allowed art to extoll only the joys of an afterlife, he had to repudiate all his works, including *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Tolstoy's preparations to settle himself in the Christian condition of increased conscience with decreased consciousness were signaled, Plekhanov found, by the extraordinary and selfish antics of Konstantin Levin (*Anna Karenina*).

Plekhanov described what he saw as lies and distortions resulting from this turn of events in Tolstoy's life and his subsequent need to justify himself. Tolstoy lied, for instance, in this *Confession* about his motives for writing. It was extremely difficult to believe, Plekhanov said, that the only reason Tolstoy wrote *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* was vulgar vanity and greed. Tolstoy also lied about his indifference to religion during most of his life. Already in *Childhood* he showed a fondness for the religious antics of Grisha the Fool. Sarcastically Plekhanov asserted that he would never dare question Tolstoy's sincerity in castigating himself for shortcomings he was not guilty of. But, he added, there had been nothing intrinsically wrong with Tolstoy that a change in orientation could not have cured. Tolstoy was a man of great and unique gifts, a man of tremendous vitality, a natural pagan who loved life but violated his nature by forcing himself into religious quietism. In adopting a set of mind-withering metaphysical tenets, he encapsulized himself inside a narrow sectarian outlook and ruined his chances of becoming an important teacher of life for the Russian people.

Plekhanov also tried to show the effects of corruption on Tolstoy's psychological skills. He acknowledged Tolstoy's great ability to draw the reader into the stream of consciousness of his characters but denied that he was a great psychologist. With reference to Tolstoy's analysis, considered his most outstanding characteristic, Plekhanov claimed that it developed because in his youth Tolstoy was interested only in himself. Therefore he could not lay claim to interest in, or understanding of, other human beings. Reluctantly Plekhanov agreed that Tolstoy usually depicted reality without embellishments and shunned artistic effects, as Chernyshevsky had already noted; nonetheless, many of Tolstoy's psychological effects were tricks. Granting that Tolstoy's descriptions of the fear of death were legitimate since his own life was shot through with intermittent fears of death, Plekhanov questioned whether Tolstoy's famous wartime descriptions of death and dying were not at least in part based on a vivid imagination. He alluded to Tolstoy's own extensive experience with the fear of death as neurotic, i.e., something less than martial and brave:

> I grant that a really good artist, even if he did not personally participate in certain events, could, to a certain extent, "guess" his way toward a fairly close approximation of what actual participants may have experienced if he himself has had *comparable* experiences. But such doubtless value of analogous experience merely reinforces the

> case all the more convincingly in favor of *actual personal experience*. Let us take, for example, some of the battle scenes that occur in the works of Tolstoy. Many, many minor details of these scenes were almost certainly construed "as a guess." Still, the overall character of the sensations of the participants impresses one as astonishingly true to life only because our great novelist has *himself experienced similar fears*. And if anyone tried on that basis to detract from his achievement as an artist, he would only reveal himself as not a very perspicacious critic. [2:441]

Interpreting Tolstoy's art psychologically, Plekhanov tried to explain it as a product of the conflict between Tolstoy's artistic sense and his unartistic views. He attempted to define its main stimulus as a neurosis that arose from a conflict between an uncontrollable love of life and an ungovernable fear of death. Tolstoy's novels were one gigantic act of sensuality, for he was, according to Plekhanov, not only a great lover of life but also a great poet of the lust for life who was intermittently assailed by an uncontrollable fear of death. In this great conflict periods of ascendance of an ascetic, life-denying Christianity alternated with periods of blithe paganism, creating an artistic dilemma:

> If life by itself has no meaning; if "only tenets of faith give meaning to life," then it is clear that the breathless exhilaration of Natasha during her preparations for the ball that is so sympathetically depicted in *War and Peace* or the boundless joy of life that seized the same Natasha at the hunt and made her squeal wildly from sheer animal excitement will also be deprived of all meaning. Well, if the endlessly varied manifestations of the joy of life have no meaning by *themselves*, then their *artistic depiction* can have no meaning either. Thus the triumph of the Christian over the pagan in the soul of Count Tolstoy forced him to adopt sharply negative positions toward his former activity as an artist. [P. 395]

Sometimes the aversion became strong enough to interfere with the artistic result. With age, Plekhanov found, this tendency increased, until Tolstoy rejected all his artistic works. The repudiation of his immortal works was a childish, petulant gesture based on Tolstoy's incomplete understanding of current issues, because of his unenlightened consciousness, Plekhanov explained, referring to it as a diseased condition that Tolstoy had brought upon himself by his religious orientation.

A major part of Plekhanov's argument comprised efforts to expose Tolstoy's impotence as a thinker. Plekhanov tried to demonstrate that conceptual confusion (*smeshenie predstavlenii*) reigned

in Tolstoy's mind, whose capability disminished after his conversion to Christianity. Tolstoy's thinking became eclectic and contradictory. Many areas of philosophical thought were inaccessible to Tolstoy's mind, which dealt in futile, philosophically naïve concepts on the order of the classic dilemma of the chicken and the egg:

> Tolstoy's doctrine of nonresistance to evil is based wholly on the juxtaposition between matters eternal and temporal, the spirit and the body. . . .
>
> In the shape in which it occurs in Tolstoy's writings, it is tantamount to a juxtaposition between man's *inner* world, which is seen as the sum total of his ethical needs and aspirations, and the *external* world that surrounds him. Each individual's own personal body, as well as the bodies of his entire kith and kin, is regarded as part of the external world. The whole thing is just one of a number of ways to contrast being and consciousness. It is by no means uncommon in the history of thought; but with Tolstoy it becomes especially plastic, whereby all its inherent contradictions become very prominent.
>
> Consciousness is not independent of being. It is first determined by being, and then influences being, thus helping being to evolve further. . . . Why [says Tolstoy] is it wrong to rescue a child from being battered by his mother? Because . . . violence applied to this Megara would constitute undue influence upon her by the external world. Therefore the state of her consciousness would be unduly determined by existential factors. Sometimes Tolstoy goes even further in using strictly materialistic arguments for what goes on in man's inner world. . . . But these are only isolated instances, erratic flashes of materialistic thought that do not merge into a coherent system and are badly expressed. In his overall outlook Tolstoy is and remains an extreme idealist in whose eyes materialism is pure nonsense. . . .
>
> It is impossible to go any further in claiming the independence of man's inner world from external conditions. . . . This declaration of independence of the inner world from the outer is tantamount to an assertion that it is unnecessary to exert any planned influence upon conditions surrounding man, any control of consciousness over being. And Tolstoy does indeed claim that all this is unnecessary. [Pp. 341–42]

Echoing similar claims by Mikhailovsky and Gorky, Plekhanov speculated that apparently Tolstoy was serious about desiring for himself immortality in the flesh. Plekhanov regarded Tolstoy as an uprooted, mentally disturbed old Russian squire in a morbid and despairing state of mind (a state Plekhanov thought was typical of the decadent period in history), asking unanswerable metaphysical

questions instead of trying to resolve problems that were well within his reach. Soviet sources usually represent Plekhanov's comparison of Tolstoy to the hero of S. Karonin's (1853–92) story "A Village Neurotic [*Derevenskie nervy*]," Gavrilo, as a sign that Plekhanov realized the closeness of Tolstoy's ideas to those of the peasant. Actually, the critique is an attempt to satirize Tolstoy's mental condition, a heavy-handed parody of Tolstoy's eccentric behavior in public and his efforts to emulate the peasant's mode of life.

> Have you had a chance to read the so-called *Confession* of Count L. Tolstoy? Doesn't Gavrilo ask himself the same questions: "Why, what for, and then what?' which plagued the famous novelist? Still, while the rich and educated count had every opportunity to answer those questions less hideously than he did in actual fact, Gavrilo, by his very station in life, was deprived of any means and any assistance in finding the proper answers. Surrounded as he was by ignorance and obscurity, there was no sign of relief for him anywhere in sight.
>
> He cried, behaved as an eccentric, was rude to the priest, and abused the medical orderly, and his exchange of fisticuffs with the village elder landed him in jail. He was rescued by the same medical orderly who drew the court's attention to the morbid psychic condition of the defendant. Gavrilo calmed down only much later, after he had found a job as a caretaker in a neighboring town. Once there, he no longer had anything to *brood* about. [2:304–5]

The article contains an address that seems to echo an earlier tirade by Dostoevsky (quoted on p. 136). Both represent, of course, the established tradition whereby Russian critics advise Russian writers on correct behavior. In his address Plekhanov counseled Tolstoy to be sensible, stop his antics, and leave home if his family irritated his nerves. Rather than working with farm implements and mulling over old problems, a change in environment and a new involvement with its problems was all that was necessary, Plekhanov said, to stabilize Tolstoy's mind:

> The metaphysic is then transformed back into a normal human being, who thinks about things that are related to normal life, but thinks about them not in his old, but in a new way. There are additional ways of effecting a cure of the same sickness: get away from the environment that led you to "thoughts about death," forget the old surroundings, find something else to do that would have nothing in common with your old environment. It may well be that these new surroundings that come to provide you with shelter will turn out to have "accursed questions" of their own, but to begin with these questions will be alien to you, and by the time they find access to your

> mind, you will have had a chance to recover your wits. . . . A cure of this sort by escape is not very attractive, but sometimes it can be effective. Gavrilo chose just such a cure and recovered in his own way. And he was cured not by any "broom" but by a simple change in his surroundings. The village he left behind ceased to bother him with its tensions, and the "thoughts about death" disappeared along with them. [2:306]

In addition to his personal criticism, Plekhanov challenged Tolstoy's qualifications as a literary critic. Tolstoy, he claimed, was inconsistent. When he wrote the introduction to the Russian translation of Wilhelm von Polenz's (1861–1903) social novel *Der Büttnerbauer* (1902), he said that critiques should never be written apropos the work discussed. Yet his own introduction, if anything, was an apropos critique. Moreover, Tolstoy was arbitrary and dogmatic about matters concerning aesthetic judgment. He repeatedly assessed the poet N. A. Nekrasov as devoid of talent, and he was wrong. He was deliberately ignoring the virtues of Nekrasov's uneven poetry (2:198, 202). Similarly, Tolstoy ignored all his life the existence of Chernyshevsky, although he had borrowed large portions of Chernyshevsky's theory of art. Chernyshevsky, on the other hand, had early acknowledged Tolstoy's merits.

Plekhanov also challenged Tolstoy's qualification as a social reformer. Most of all he focused on Tolstoy as a deviant social phenomenon, finding Tolstoy's nonresistance theory clearly absurd. Tolstoy's inability to see the merits of opposing force with force disqualified him as a serious thinker. Plekhanov felt that Tolstoy was so preoccupied with his theory that he became hypnotized by it and did not notice that it was useless and persuaded no one but himself. The value of Tolstoy's writings, Plekhanov asserted, was not in their message but in their usefulness as propaganda: Tolstoy supplied vivid illustrations of social injustices that aroused others to action against the establishment:

> The value of Tolstoy's sermon was not in its moral or religious aspect, but in vivid depictions of that exploitation of the people without which the upper classes could not exist. Tolstoy considers this exploitation from the point of view of the moral harm it causes the exploiters. Still, none of this interfered with his ability to depict these things with his usual, which is to say gigantic, talent. . . .
>
> Whenever he begins with the power at his command to analyze the psychological motivation of representatives and defenders of the existing order of things; when he exposes all the conscious and unconscious hypocrisy revealed in their continuous sanctimonious ref-

> erences to the public good—then he must be credited with tremendous civic achievement. He preaches nonresistance to evil by force; yet some of his pages that are like the ones I just described arouse in the readers' hearts a sacred desire to meet reactionary violence with revolutionary force. He recommends limiting protests to *weapons of criticism*; yet those splendid pages doubtless provide ample justification for sharpest *criticism with weapons*. All this—and only this—is valuable in the sermons of Count Tolstoy. [Pp. 377–78]

Such an effect, Plekhanov went on, was hardly anticipated by the celebrated author-pacifist who found no virtue in civic militancy. His spontaneous, intuitive genius compelled his interest in the plight of the common man, whom he depicted with characteristic effectiveness; any effect beyond that, however, was unintentional. Tolstoy had remained consistent in his attitudes since *Childhood*. He condemned the modern proletarian as a "sad mistake" because the latter was too active in civic affairs and not submissive and placid like Platon Karataev. Tolstoy's own attacks on the establishment were too traditional to bother anyone. His tirades were the railings of Constitutional Democrats, coached in the language of mysticism. Plekhanov dismissed them as socially irrelevant. He found Tolstoy's views incredibly unrealistic; he was shocked and amazed to find Tolstoy throwing together political reactionaries, clerics, and radical revolutionary assassins as indulging equally in "orgies of selfish animalism." Sentiments like these established Tolstoy's utter political naïveté, and Plekhanov judged it a good thing that Tolstoy was not interested in politics: otherwise he might have become a rabid reactionary. Plekhanov deemed it not unlikely that a mild evolution toward a higher social consciousness was taking place in Tolstoy's mind; but the growth was insignificant and hardly adequate. Tolstoy never came to realize that it was not enough to repudiate upper class values just for himself, but that it was also necessary to struggle for the enlightenment of others. So, Plekhanov concluded, under the circumstances, how could Tolstoy ever seriously be believed to be a national or international sage or teacher of life?

In Plekhanov's opinion, then, Tolstoy was a revolutionary freak—a politically counterproductive phenomenon of Russian life—a great artist who chose to remain peripheral to the revolutionary movement. He was useful to the Marxist cause only in the limited sense of having an unusual talent for depicting vivid scenes of social injustice. He was otherwise a poor thinker and a reactionary:

> His own moral and mental development took a path that had nothing in common with the path along which moved the moral and mental development of the educated Russian *raznochinets*. Tolstoy is a squire to the tips of his fingernails even where he *appears* as a revolutionary. In *his* rejections there is not a single atom of revolutionary fervor. [2:198]
>
> But this is not important. For in what is important, Tolstoy was absolutely right. One cannot imagine any group of people further removed from him ideologically than modern socialists, to put it more accurately, those among them who fully understand the meaning of their own theoretical views and their own practical aspirations. One could not put it any better: "it is like two ends of an open ring. . . . One must travel the entire distance before one can get from one end to the other." Whoever fails to understand the implications of this is guilty of conceptual confusion.
>
> Just how many among us are nowadays guilty of this sin, let the reader be the judge. [P. 359]

This last remark is of mild historic interest. It appears to have been aimed at none other than Lenin, who in 1908 declared Tolstoy to be the "mirror of the Russian revolution." Apparently Plekhanov hoped to implant in the reader's mind the same doubt about Lenin's intellectual integrity as he did with his remarks about Tolstoy. Whether or not the hint ever registered is a matter of conjecture. Soviet sources apparently chose to ignore it, since the passage appears freely in Plekhanov's writings selected for publication by Soviet editors. Perhaps its subtlety eludes them. However, one must not assume anything with certainty. Soviet squabbles sometimes take bizarre turns. They are as well hidden from the outside world by their complexity as were the court intrigues of old Byzantium, to which they bear a not inconsiderable resemblance. Furthermore, Plekhanov's arguments were ambivalent even by Russian standards. His method of proof was petty and argumentative. He engaged in personalities, denigrated his opponents with sarcasm and innuendo, drew obscure allegorical inferences understandable only to insiders, and employed the other intricacies of nineteenth-century Russian journalese called Aesopic language. For a period of time, most major Marxists tended to side with Plekhanov's claim that Tolstoy's art was damaged beyond redemption by false ideological content that, because it was integral to Tolstoy's art, could not be extracted and isolated from it. This point of view did not so well survive the test of politics and time, however, and the current Marxist position is different. It underwent change after the revolution, when Lenin's articles became the official statement of

policy on Tolstoy. The two positions are remarkably different in spirit.

Lenin showed less interest in Tolstoy as a person and concentrated on the efficacy of his works. For Lenin, Tolstoy was not so much a confused and bewildered Russian aristocrat, bemused by the complexities of modern age and wallowing in reflexia, as a great writer and a lucid thinker who clearly reflected the mood and the events of his time. Confused on many issues, and not knowing any of the answers, he nevertheless managed to pose and record for posterity most of the really significant issues and unanswerable questions of his day. According to Lenin, Tolstoy thus qualified as a faithful chronicler of the events, moods, and conditions during the turbulent forty-year period that began with the emancipaiton of the serfs in 1861 and ended with the peasant revolts of 1905.

LENIN

As regards literature, communism's greatest sage[18] and the foremost authority on Marxism today, Vladimir Ilych Lenin [Ul'ianov] (1870–1924), was a pragmatist. One would look in vain for extensive theoretical studies in literary criticism or aesthetics in the many volumes of his collected works.[19] His first article on Tolstoy was written for the express purpose of explaining the meaning of Tolstoy as a mirror of the Russian revolution.[20] His subsequent articles were primarily restatements of his original premise.[21] Their number (six), tenor, and timing suggest that they were intended to offset the impression Plekhanov's articles created. However, these small pieces have had a profound effect upon the evolution, standards, and methods of Soviet literary criticism, and now form its basis.

Soviet scholarly and critical sources agree today that practically all major premises of Soviet literary criticism derive in one way or another from Lenin's articles on Tolstoy. This is probably an exaggeration. Yet Struve[22] is unjust in saying that those articles were perfunctory, or that they do not warrant the importance attached to them by Soviet literary scholars. Like so much of what is accepted as valid about the Soviets today, this opinion stems partly from a disdain for the issues involved—issues that are fundamental to the philosophy of communism. Lenin's articles dealt with very broad definitions. He was concerned with assigning Tolstoy his proper place in history and defining his usefulness to the Marxist cause. Looking at Tolstoy both as a man and as a writer, Lenin

explained how his extraordinary life and vivid art galvanized every significant issue he touched, which then could be dealt with exhaustively by properly trained Marxists.

Lenin examined Tolstoy's art as a significant phenomenon of Russian life. He credited Tolstoy with an ability to present forcefully the important, yet not always topical, issues that had been brought to the attention of the public by Marxists before. Tolstoy's treatment reactivated them; it provided these issues with a new, artistic form that made them more permanent and provided them with an important feature: plasticity, which offset the threat that the issues could be flattened out by repetition and lose their power to hold the public's attention. Lenin, who thought of the revolution as a three-stage process, assigned Tolstoy a place as a sage or chronicler of its middle or second stage:

> Tolstoy's commentary is not new. He has yet to say anything that has not been said long before him in European and Russian literature by people who were on the side of workers. But the uniqueness of Tolstoy's criticism and its historical significance is in the fact that it expresses, with such power as is common only to artists of genius, the radical break in the views of the broadest masses of the population during the specified period, namely, those of the peasant population of rural Russia. For Tolstoyan criticism of the present order of things differs from criticism of the same order of things by representatives of the modern labor movement precisely because Tolstoy's positions are those of the patriarchal, naïve peasant; Tolstoy imbues his criticism, his doctrine, with the psychology of the peasant. The reason Tolstoy's criticism is distinguished by such force of feeling, such passion, convincingness, freshness, sincerity, fearless determination "to reach the root," find the real cause of the misery of the masses, is that his criticism actually reflects the break in the views of millions of peasants who have just come into freedom from serfdom and seen that this freedom means new horrors of ruin, hungry death, homeless life among city dregs, etc. Tolstoy reflects their mood so truthfully that he himself carries into his doctrine their naïveté, their alienation from politics, their mysticism, desire to leave the world, "nonresistance to evil," impotent curses of capitalism and the "power of money." The protest of millions of peasants and their despair—this is what has come together in Tolstoy's doctrine. [P. 67]

In short, Tolstoy brought all these issues into prominence by correlating and juxtaposing them in the context of his works in an extraordinarily vivid, visual form: "Tolstoy not only contributed works of art that will be always valued and read by the masses, . . . he managed to convey with remarkable power the mood of broad masses, . . . sketch their situation, express their elemental feeling of

protest and outrage. Tolstoy belongs primarily to the epoch of 1861–1904, and in his works he gave flesh and blood and extraordinary plasticity, both as an artist and as a thinker and preacher, to the historically unique features of the entire first Russian revolution, its strength and its weakness" (p. 59). Lenin's opinion was based on sound current scholarship, especially his assertion that in Tolstoy's hands, those features became world literature, and thus a permanent record of the times.[23] Tolstoy's prominence as a world figure in itself gave him importance; the issues he touched were automatically propelled into significant notice. So, Lenin said, by reflecting the causes and reasons for the Russian revolution in his works, Tolstoy made the Russian revolution into a world issue.

Lenin discussed Tolstoy's uniqueness as a writer who had repudiated his own class and become a writer of national stature. Lenin disagreed with those who, like Plekhanov, claimed that Tolstoy expressed only the aspirations of his own class. The rapid changes caused by the industrialization of Russia, he said, had jolted Tolstoy out of his aristocratic complacency and sharpened his perceptions. In turn, this caused him to repudiate the values of his class. His ties to the nobility were thus incidental. Alienation enabled him to gain a proper perspective, a superior historical vantage point, and with it an undistorted point of view. A significant contributing factor was his expulsion from the Russian Orthodox church. Tolstoy thus found himself outside the old feudal society and tribal culture. Being neither of the establishment nor a Marxist, Tolstoy reflected the outlook of the disenchanted, disenfranchized masses. In many ways his position also corresponded to the point of view of other alert thinking men of his day, the *raznochintsy* (cf. the opposite point of view expressed by Plekhanov). To this, Lenin said, was added Tolstoy's unique ability to put his views into a highly effective artistic form that included an ability to create vivid, memorable types:

> Tolstoy knew rural Russia, the life of landowners and peasants, superlatively well. His works contain such pictures of that way of life as to make them into masterpieces of world literature. The drastic breakup of all "old foundations" of rural Russia sharpened his perceptions, deepened his interest in what was going on around him, brought about a break in his whole outlook. By birth and upbringing Tolstoy belonged to the upper landowning nobility in Russia. He broke with all customary views of that environment and in his last

> works descended with passionate criticism upon all contemporary governmental, church, social, and economic conditions based upon slavery of the masses, their poverty, the ruin of peasants and small owners generally, upon coercion and hypocrisy which still saturate contemporary life from top to bottom. [P. 66]

Lenin was more tolerant of Tolstoy's foibles than one would expect from one of his inflexible temperament. As a rule, he treated Tolstoy with considerable affection. He spoke of Tolstoy as though he were old Russia, the living embodiment of its strengths and weaknesses: the healthy, sober realism of the Russian people, and the corrupting influence of their obsolete religion. Lenin found other correspondences between Tolstoy's and the peasants' points of view. Like the peasant, Tolstoy hated the old forms of government. And, like the peasant, he wanted a new government without any ideas on how to achieve one. But with even more fervor than that for forms of exploitation, he hated the new menace of capitalism. His confusion on this subject reflected the confusion of the peasant who resented the status quo, yet acquiesced in it from a long-standing habit of submitting to authority. Tolstoy's theories rationalized the failure of the peasant to take his destiny in his own hands: his sloth, ignorance, stubbornness, and apparently unbreakable habit of sitting things out and doing nothing about them, while appealing to an absolute authority in heaven and on earth to solve all his problems conveniently:

> Although the peasants desired new forms of community life, they had a very unconscious, patriarchal, feeble-minded attitude toward the shape this community life was supposed to take, what struggle it would require to actually earn their freedom, what leaders they could have in this struggle. . . . The whole previous life of the peasants had taught them to hate the master and the government official, but it did not and could not teach them where to look for answers to all those questions. . . . The majority of the peasants cried and prayed, foolishly argued and dreamed, wrote petitions, and sent petitioners, exactly in the spirit of Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy! . . . The Tolstoyan ideas are a mirror of the weaknesses, the shortcomings of our peasant revolt, a reflection of the spinlessness of the patriarchal village and the ingrained cowardice of the property-oriented small peasant. [P. 56]

Lenin explained his reasons for regarding Tolstoy as a mirror of the Russian revolution. He outlined the social, political, and historic reasons for giving Tolstoy this role, as well as the attitude he

recommended others to take toward Tolstoy as an artist and thinker (sage). It would be reasonable to assume that the correct attitude was, first of all, the

> attitude toward any writer who wrote several outstanding literary works that assure him a place among the greatest writers of the world, a thinker who with enormous power, conviction, and sincerity *raised* a whole series of questions in relation to the fundamental features of the contemporary political and social order. . . .
>
> Tolstoy began to write when serfdom was still in force but already at a time when it was clearly living out its last days. Tolstoy's main activity falls into that period of Russian history which lies between its two turning points, the years 1861 and 1905. During that period traces of serfdom, its direct residues, were permeating the entire economic (particularly rural) and political life of the land. This period was characterized by two simultaneous phenomena: spontaneous vigorous growth of capitalism at the grassroots level, and vigorous implantation of capitalism from above. . . .
>
> The political structure of Russia during that time was also thoroughly permeated by serfdom-related practices. One can see this in the structure of the government, . . . the dominant influence of the landed gentry upon the affairs of state, the abuses of power by government officials, especially those in higher, more privileged positions of power, who also happened to be members of the landed aristocracy.
>
> This old patriarchal Russia quickly began to fall apart after 1861 under the influence of world capitalism. Peasants went hungry, died out, were ruined at a pace faster than ever before, and fled to the cities, leaving the land behind. Railroads, factories, industrial complexes were being built at an increased pace thanks to the readily available "cheap labor" of the ruined peasants. There was rapid growth of high finance, big business, and industry.
>
> This entire process of this swift, painful breakdown of the foundations of life in old Russia is reflected in the works of fiction written by Tolstoy the artist, and in the views of Tolstoy the thinker. [Pp. 65–66]

> Tolstoy's doctrine is assuredly utopian and thoroughly reactionary in the strictest, profoundest sense of the word. But this does not mean, nor should it be construed to mean, that it cannot be socialistic or that it does not contain critical elements that can provide valuable material for the enlightenment of progressive classes. [P. 77]

> The contradictions in the works, views, doctrines, the school of Tolstoy are glaring indeed. On the one hand we have the brilliant artist who has produced not only incomparable pictures of Russian life but also first-rate works of world literature. On the other hand we have a country squire acting the fool-in-Christ. On the one hand

> we have a remarkably powerful, direct, and sincere protest against social lies and falsehood, while on the other we have the "Tolstoyan," i.e., the washed-out, hysterical creature, a gutless species known as the Russian intellectual who publicly beats his breast and cries: "I am vile, I am wretched, but I am working on my own moral self-improvement: I no longer eat meat and nourish myself with rice patties." On the one hand Tolstoy remorselessly criticizes capitalist exploitation and exposes the violent methods of the government, the farce of the courts, and of public administration, reveals the entire extent of the contradictions between the growth of wealth and the achievements of civilization, and the increasing destitution, brutalization, and misery of the working masses; on the other he preaches his feeble-minded doctrine of "nonresistance to evil" by forceful means. On the one hand, there is the most sober realism of his works, the tearing away of all and sundry masks; on the other he preaches one of the vilest things on earth—religion—and wants to replace priests who look upon their job as an official function with priests who would do the same from moral conviction, that is, he promotes the far subtler and therefore particularly disgusting form of clericalism. [P. 54]

Glaring contradictions, irreconcilable differences, and general inefficiency were, in Lenin's view, characteristics of old Russia. They were the reason it functioned so badly as a society. The many discordant factors rendered the society itself ineffective. Because Tolstoy's views represented the agglomeration of these contradictions, they were subject to the same shortcomings. Obviously these views were obsolete, reactionary, utopian, even vile; but because they were so incongruous and so contradictory, there seemed no need to be unduly concerned with them. They were infantile and could be safely ignored. By any standard they were outdated. This aspect of Tolstoy's philosophy was most blatant in his contention that the national trade should be conducted on the basis of barter, as is customary in a tribal society, rather than a money economy.

On the other hand, Tolstoy knew rural Russia extremely well and rendered an unmatched artistic account of its life during the transitional period between 1861 and 1905. According to Lenin's own diagnostic theories,[24] this was the second stage of the triple series of revolutionary upheavals that made up the great Russian Revolution, during which the changeover from an agrarian tribal to an industrial civilized society would occur. This second period was marked by especially severe confusion and drastic changes, and it was extremely difficult to describe it objectively. Tolstoy was its chronicler, as well as its living embodiment. His works, as well as he

himself, reflected the tensions between the still largely extant remnants of the tribal society—patriarchal old rural Russia—and a new Russia that was for the time being completely overwhelmed by Western-style capitalism. In exposing this situation—this preparatory revolutionary process and its pressures—in his works, Tolstoy revealed it as a historic necessity:

> In a series of brilliant works that he produced during more than half a century of creativity, Tolstoy painted mostly the old, prerevolutionary Russua, which remained in a state of semiserfdom even after the year 1861. He described the Russia of the villagers, the Russia of the landed gentleman and his peasant. In depicting this stage in the historic life of Russia, Tolstoy managed to raise in his works so many great issues, and succeeded in rising to such heights of artistic performance, that his works are now counted among the greatest in world literature. So, the period of preparation for a revolution in a country that was severely oppressed by serf-owners has been revealed, thanks to Tolstoy's brilliant treatment, as a step foward in the artistic evolution of mankind. [P. 58]

Tolstoy was an expert observer of these disturbing events in the life of the country, when old social forms were being replaced with the new, and the ensuing confusion and perturbation. He depicted the resulting complexities in their historical perspective. He showed the disintegration of the old establishment with its traditions, and the tensions that followed between the old and new forms of life, truthfully and without distortion. His works exposed the decay of old institutions, the rotten state of the old regime, and the habitual exploitation of the people by the gentry that was still taken for granted by both sides. In fact, he himself actively contributed to the breakup of the old system. Lenin was delighted with Tolstoy's spirited attacks upon the hallowed institutions of the old order: the family, the landed squirearchy, the church, the courts, the press, the sciences, the civil and military administrations. He viewed these attacks, furthermore, as topical. They came at a time when the archaic social order and type of land ownership had become utterly untenable, and Tolstoy's works represented the makeshift condition of the economy, which was summed up so well by Levin of *Anna Karenina* as being in a state of flux, a state during which there was no telling what would eventually come of it all. His works also reflected the ineptitude of the peasant in dealing with old and new conditions alike. The free villagers of the day were the serfs and bondsmen of the past but lacked the protection of the old system

and the skill to maintain their freedom. They were especially vulnerable to attacks from both the old officialdom and the private sector. Faithfully, and with extraordinary vividness, Tolstoy focused on the vulnerability of the peasant who was menaced by the new predators, the capitalist operators who came to the village to prey on the peasant. Tolstoy's works reflected the narrow bigoted outlook of the peasant, his incompetence, emotionalism, spontaneous vehemence, and untrained, uneducated mind. The peasants, Lenin said, were indeed ignorant and superstitious, and they saw in capitalism one of the menaces of a new apocalyptic age that was descending upon them from the city and from abroad (pp. 59–60).

Tolstoy's works also reflected the prevailing mood of the period: a mood of anger, fear, and rebellion. The peasant was in an ugly mood, for he had accumulated hatred in centuries of oppression. His aspirations were frustrated, for he had put his trust in a corrupt and incompetent government. Tolstoy's works in fact described the fears and worries of an administration that had only its own interests at heart, the hypocritical mentality of landowners who spoke of helping the peasant but were only concerned about helping themselves, the disgust of the peasant with his infantile masters' and government's failure to protect him, and at the same time his childish trust in the higher wisdom and competence of the church and the czar. By depicting the politically unsophisticated point of view of rural Russia, Tolstoy also revealed in his works the causes of the failure of the first round of revolutionary riots in 1905: "Tolstoy reflected accumulated hatred, ripe aspirations for a better life, desire to get rid of the past—and the immaturity of daydreaming, lack of political training, and revolutionary spinelessness. Historical and economic conditions explain both the necessity for the appearance of the revolutionary struggle of the masses and their lack of preparation for the struggle, the Tolstoyan nonresistance to evil, which was one of the most serious causes of the defeat of the first revolutionary campaign [of 1905–6]" (p. 57). Tolstoy's works posed and illuminated most of the important problems and questions of the period: the enlightenment and education of the people; the menace of capitalism; the selection of leaders; the means of fighting for freedom; the causes of the peasants' mistrust of other classes, including the proletariat; the necessity for violent overthrow of the old regime; the organization of the communal living of the future; and the weaknesses of the old system.

Tolstoy also brought out the important issues of the day, including the need for self-discipline and a new, historically (rather than religiously) oriented ideology that served as a guide for the future, replacing the old religion that may have had its uses in the past but was not completely useless and thus an impediment to progress. Tolstoy's works offered vivid illustrations of what was right and what was wrong about old Russia, and why the time had come for a revolution. Lenin thus described Tolstoy as a tribal sage—a poet who reflects and formulates important issues and describes in vivid entertaining form the desirable and undesirable features of social and political life.

In order to demonstrate how Tolstoy embodied within himself the faults and virtues of old Russian mentality, Lenin examined Tolstoy's paradoxical and many-faceted personality. On one hand, Lenin said, Tolstoy was modern: a brilliant writer who mercilessly criticized the old regime by means of most effective, sober realism. On the other hand there was an anachronistic side to his personality: a savage noble, putting on antics and playing the fool-in-Christ to command attention in the hallowed traditions of old Russia with its czars and its boyars. He was also a Russian intellectual, a superfluous man, confused and disoriented, who preached the preposterous doctrine of nonresistance, spouting vague metaphysical nonsense and indulging in childish fancies. But the point was that these contradictions within Tolstoy were not incidental, Lenin said. They reflected the current contradictions in Russian reality and were indicative of the considerable morbid tensions that developed in the social fabric from the all-too-rapid changes in its structure (p. 55).

Tolstoy's views thus gave a fairly accurate cross section of the welter of existing opinions of his day, when everyone was offering solutions to current problems without having any idea what to do. This made his personal problems a significant index of objective reality. Tolstoy combined conservatism and radicalism, reflecting the state of mind of most Russians at the time, who were engaged in the process of readjusting themselves to the rapidly changing conditions. He reflected the generally unstable intellectual climate of the age. The causes of Tolstoy's confusion, Lenin found, were the same that created confusion in the minds of most Russians who lacked training in Marxist interpretation of history. His condition also established him as irrevocably committed to the past. Lenin, who apparently reserved for himself the role of pediatrician in

assisting mother Russia in giving birth to a new communist society explained Tolstoy's qualifications as her tutor. He would not be allowed into this promised land of the future because of his resistance to modern ideas. Like Moses, he could only guide her during exodus from the darkness of slavery. Lenin argued that although Tolstoy could see extremely well into the past, he could not see well into the future because he lacked greater historic perspective. He had a powerful intellect but it was not attuned to the twentieth century; it bogged down in concepts and prejudices of the past, into which Tolstoy had a keen but exclusive and one-sided view. Thus he could not interpret the future, or find any but naïve answers to the sophisticated problems of the future, because his vision past a certain point in history was blurred and everything beyond marred by extreme confusion, errors, and subjective judgment. His rational approach to problems of the past gave way to irrationalism and mysticism. His castigations of the establishment were correct and in tune with historic conditions, but his suggestions of a mystic solution to Russia's problems in the future were not. His eschatological prognostications were typical of his uninformed view and the blurred vision of the decadent period. His vehement criticism accompanied a failure to take action.

Lenin described some of Tolstoy's unsound, unfocused, undifferentiated reasoning, in which fighting the regime of the landowners became a rejection of all authority and vague daydreams of communal living in Utopia, fighting a police state became a rejection of all politics, and fighting the established church became the hope for a substitute religion based on submission. Tolstoy's rejection of landed property in his way led him to reject all property. His rejection of capitalism came to include all those who fought it. His impotent cursing of the decrepit old regime accompanied a failure to make any provisions for dealing with the new menace of capitalism, for Tolstoy advocated the overthrow of the old regime but remained uninvolved in preparations for the revolution of 1905. Lenin explained Tolstoyism as a manifestation of the latent streak of stagnant savage or, as he put it, "asiatic" mentality in every Russian. Historically, he said, this mentality was "finished" by the revolution of 1905, which also discredited Tolstoy's utopian eschatological views and destroyed his theory of nonresistance.

Lenin thus established Tolstoy's competence as unlimited socially and artistically, but limited in time. Tolstoy was no guide for the future. His death marked, as well as symbolized, the end of old

Russia. Within his own period, however, the information he provided was invaluable, and should be studied carefully and with profit:

> Tolstoy is dead, and prerevolutionary Russia is receding into the past. Its weakness and ineffectualness have been formulated in the philosophy and depicted in the works of the brilliant artist. But there are things in his legacy that are not receding into the past, things that belong to the future. This legacy has been accepted by the Russian proletariat that is working on it. The proletariat will explain to the masses, who now toil and are being exploited, the meaning of Tolstoy's criticism of the state, the church, private land ownership—not so that the masses could be content with self-improvement and dreams abut a "godly" life, but in order to make them rise up and deliver a new blow to the czar's monarchy and the squires' ownership of the land, which in 1905 were only slightly damaged, and which now must be completely destroyed. The proletariat will explain to the masses Tolstoy's criticism of capitalism—not so that the masses should be content to curse capitalism and the power of money, but so that they will learn with every step of their lives, and in their struggles, to utilize the technical and social achievements of capitalism, learn to join together into a united army of socialist fighters, millions strong, who will depose capitalism [as a form of government] and create a new society without impoverishment of the people, without the exploitation of man by man. [P. 62]

Lenin warned, however, about the dangers of confused interpretation, from the high veracity of Tolstoy's pictures of the past, as a blueprint for the future. Toying with Tolstoy's theories, he maintained, was harmful nonsense, and attempts to sanctify them criminal nonsense. Those who did this, like the Russian liberals, belonged, like Tolstoy, to the past. The liberals were confused about what constituted Tolstoy's good and bad points. They were equally confused about the significative extent of Tolstoy's ideas:

> Just look at the way Tolstoy is being assessed by liberal newspapers. All they can come up with is empty official liberal prattle, all those trite professorial phrases about the "voice of civilized mankind," "united response of the whole world," "ideas of truth and good," etc., for which Tolstoy so strongly—and justly—castigated the bourgeois arts and sciences. They are *incapable* of expressing clearly and directly their assessment of Tolstoy's views about the state, the church, private land ownership, capitalism—and not because they fear interference by the board of censors; on the contrary, the board of censors helps them out of their embarrassment!—but because every position in Tolstoy's criticism is a slap in the face of bourgeois liberalism; because the fearless, open, sharp, and merciless *postula-*

> *tion* by Tolstoy of the most painful, most accursed questions of our time is enough by itself to constitute a slap in the face of those who use trite phrases, shopworn devices for wriggling out of embarrassing situations, all those devious "civilized" lies concocted by our liberal (and liberal-*narodniki*) press. The liberals are behind Tolstoy all the way, they support him against the synod—and at the same time they are also friends with the *Vekhi*-people with whom "one can have a good argument, but whom one must tolerate within the party, because one simply must work with them both in literature and in politics!" And the *Vekhi*-people are kissed and embraced by [the decadent] Anthony Volynsky.
>
> The liberals are so fond of emphasizing that Tolstoy is "the great conscience." Isn't this an empty phrase that is repeated in a thousand variants in the *New Time* and the like? Isn't this just a way to avoid all those *concrete* questions of democracy and socialism that have been *raised* by Tolstoy? Doesn't this merely emphasize all that which expresses Tolstoy's prejudice and not his judgment, all those things in him that belong to the past, and not the future, his rejection of politics and his preaching of moral self-improvement, and not his stormy protest against class domination? [Pp. 61–62]

So, the liberals praised Tolstoy's weakest points—his subjective opinions, formed as the result of subjective experience, of no value to anyone, not even to Tolstoy himself. It was imperative, Lenin insisted, to understand that the meaning of Tolstoy's real message was not the vague message of his so-called Christian anarchism, but a revolutionary call for action in clearing the land of old institutions and other impediments to progress:

> The effort to sweep away, raze to the ground the official church, the landed squirearchy, and government by landed squires, to destroy all the old forms and systems of land ownership, to clear the ground, and to create everywhere, in place of a state run by privileged classes supported by the police, communities of free and equal small peasants—such an endeavor runs like a red thread through every historical step taken by the peasants in our revolution; and there is no doubt that the ideological content of Tolstoy's writings corresponds far more to this endeavor of the peasants than to the abstract "Christian anarchism" that the system of his opinions is sometimes judged to be. [Pp. 55–56]

Only the vague mind of a liberal could be still in doubt about this, Lenin said. The liberals failed to get the point of Tolstoy's message because they were so used to compromise and abstraction that they no longer recognized a revolutionary call for immediate action. Yet, just as it was wrong to accept Tolstoy's entire message indiscriminately, so it was wrong to condemn him indiscriminately

for his views that could not be judged by the yardstick of the present. The discriminating Marxist had to sift through Tolstoy's works for true and false statements: the objective and reasonable, and the subjective unreasonable elements, i.e., to separate Tolstoy's intellect from his prejudice. Properly interpreted, Tolstoy's works supplied a wealth of useful information. Therefore they should be made available in large editions to many people. In a style reminiscent of the last part of "The Death of Ivan Ilych," Lenin said that the average Russian, too, would have to be put through the paces of reading about Russia's past mistakes reflected in Tolstoy's works. The average Russian would have to be "pushed through" the "black bag" of his obscurity to greater awareness of the causes of past mistakes: woolly-mindedness, inertia, and a crippling lack of mental discipline. Tolstoy's works supplied plentiful illustrations of all such faults. By studying them, and learning from them, the average Russian could be "reborn" into a new and better breed of human being, a political animal:

> By studying the works of Leo Tolstoy, the Russian working class will get to know better its enemies; understanding the *teachings* of Tolstoy will help the entire Russian people realize the nature of its own weakness which did not allow them to finish the work of their own liberation. One must understand this in order to move forward.
>
> This movement forward is hindered by all those who declare Tolstoy to be "everyone's conscience," "the teacher of life." This is a lie, spread deliberately by liberals who want to exploit the controversial side of Tolstoy's teachings. This lie about Tolstoy as the "teacher of life" is repeated after the liberals even by some former social democrats.
>
> The Russian people will achieve liberation [from prejudice] only when they understand that not from Tolstoy must they learn about how to attain a better life but from that class whose significance Tolstoy did not understand and which is alone capable of destroying that old world which Tolstoy hates—from the proletariat. [P. 68]

Clearly, the virtue of Lenin's short articles on Tolstoy was in his concise definition of Tolstoy's usefulness to the Marxist cause. The articles showed that Tolstoy's outstanding characteristics as a writer relieved him of the need to be a Marxist in order to be accepted by Marxists. They explained that Tolstoy's confusion was a well-deserved penalty for his failure to be a Marxist and disqualified him from being a "teacher of life": the excessive inward orientation of the Tolstoyan doctrine and its preoccupation with problems of consciousness failed to teach Russians how to deal with problems of

being. All the same, the Lenin articles maintained, his basic attitude was correct: it was revolutionary, radical, and socialist in essence. Because they supplied a wealth of memorable information about his age, his works could be made into a valuable tool in the hands of properly trained Marxists. Therefore he should be accorded the status of a "mirror," that is, a chronicler, a sage without a message, or a subaltern sage in an early stage of the Russian Revolution. With these guidelines one knew where one stood with Tolstoy.

These articles had no immediate effect until the Revolution of 1917. Soon afterward, however, their impact snowballed until it became nothing less than enormous. What follows is a brief enumeration of their effects on Soviet art and literary scholarship. One quite significant effect was that they boosted respect for classical literature and superior craftsmanship. And they also helped stay the contamination of literature by methods of political propaganda. There is no doubt that Lenin's articles on Tolstoy were instrumental in the definition of socialist realism adopted by the first Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, still held to be valid for Soviet and generally Marxist literature all over the world.

The articles enabled Soviet theoreticians to draw up guidelines for writers and critics. A major theoretical premise derived is the so-called theory of reflection, in substance Aristotle's theory, which allocates to art the typical, and to history the actual, elements of reality.[25] Lenin's variant adds the supposition that typical (significant) elements of reality change with historical periods. They are referred to as "revolutionary changes in reality." One of the functions of literature, then, is to record and document these changes as they occur, and it is preferable that the writers be contemporary with the events described. Their task is to elicit the gist of empirical reality, which is, in Marxist authority (which reflects eighteenth-century rationalism and faith in the unlimited capacity of reason), completely though not easily knowable. Writers should document these changes and other typical aspects of their age in vivid, understandable form; these are crucial aspects of the work in terms of its "artistic quality," without which it is denied merit as a work of art. Images must be truthful and represent reality as it actually is. Anything that involves misrepresentation, or the presentation of something that was not actually there, is a falsehood and therefore unartistic. Within this truthfulness or "realism" the general and typical aspects of reality are to be given preference over unusual,

individual, or unique manifestations of reality. The work of art must represent not only its creator and his ideas but also his environment and the society that produced them. And it must teach. Any undue shift toward the creator and away from the environment is considered detrimental to the artistic and didactic quality of the work.

Accordingly, the artist is an eyewitness to history whose work must also have a message with ideological content (*ideinost'*), which conveys the significance of the described events and furnishes the understanding needed to recognize the direction of the historical development and to divine correctly its "revolutionary peaks." Thus ideological content, although including a partisan communist attitude, may extend further, since its purpose emphasizes useful information rather than a doctrinal position. It can be quite outside of party ideology, provided the artist honestly and truthfully recorded what he saw. However, the message must include reflections on the meaning of the "revolutionary changes in reality" depicted and described—significant shifts in historic reality, catastrophic events, generally unusual elements in their relation to the usual, routine elements, insofar as they illustrate or pertain to significant ideas. The artist is thus also an interpreter of history. He is, in a word, preferably a sage and teacher, and not only a chronicler, or clerk of history. The facts and ideas he presents must be described in a simple, unpretentious manner, a form that is easily understandable to the mass man. He must avoid causing confusion in the common man's consciousness by overwhelming him with too much contradictory evidence that must be filtered out. He must help the mass man's undifferentiated consciousness grow more differentiated by stimulating thinking. He does so by juxtaposing within his work significant events and ideas to bring out their mutual interrelatedness in vivid illustrations, in accordance with Lenin's theory of periodization. The writer-teacher-poet-sage is judged by how closely he reflects major trends of his period, and by how realistically, that is, accurately, he presents them, and generalizes the complex life processes he describes. The criteria are considered to be those of socialist realism.

This somewhat pedagogical theory also emphasizes the importance of creating vivid, memorable types that carry standard features of common humanity and the impersonal aspirations of many men, rather than individual, incidental characteristics. The mass

man, the average reader, must be able to relate to the protagonist, must want to imitate him, and must learn from him to approach his own problems of adjustment to society. In the theory *narodnost'*, another important derivative concept with a long history in nineteenth-century Russian thought, became once again reiterated as a crucial element in a work of literature. *Narodnost'* implies plainness, or a simplicity of form and manner; it refers to the quality in a work of art that synthesizes salient characteristics of the national psyche, the goals and aspirations of the nation as a whole. The concept is elusive and difficult to define. It implies that the work is original and typical at the same time—unlike the literature of any other nation, yet immediately recognizable as belonging to one's own. *Narodnost'*, furthermore, arises completely apart from conscious endeavor. A genuine artist is deemed to be projecting this quality into all of his work unconsciously, without knowing the process in the least. *Narodnost'* provides the work of art with the quality of inner wholeness and realism that cannot be pretended. And it also stamps it with the markings of national lore.

For a while these concepts created some problems. It seemed as though under the pressure of the times the two basic elements of art—fact and idea—had suffered a schizophrenic split and separated, leaving one sector of the literary scene in possessiion of facts, another in possession of ideas. The eyewitness concept gave rise to crude "literature of fact," practiced by LEF[26] and other literary avant-garde groups who studded their work with bulky quotes from the news media, slogans, and other pedestrian documents of the day that seemed to them the best original sources of information about the age. On the other hand, emphasis on message (*ideinost'*), national spirit (*narodnost'*), and types gave rise to the streamlined plots and crude generalizations produced by "Lit-front," and revolutionary romanticism, which scorned realistic detail and emphasized desirable typical features in revolutionary heroes and heroines to the point that they lacked recognizable individual features other than those of common humanity. They became folkloric: vaguely superhuman men and women of heroic stature and absolutely average human characteristics—semidivine archetypal figures who resembled the gods, saints, and heroes of yore. Such faults by design in following the theory have been corrected. But the trend toward the proliferation of types persists, apparently a result of Lenin's quite specific praise of Tolstoy's abil-

ity to create vivid memorable "types," rather than individuals. Soviet literature is still flooded with stereotypes and characters in whom individuality, human faults, and psychology are undeveloped. The positive hero of socialist realism is still a person of little individuality who thinks and behaves as though slightly benumbed. He is unself-consciously "like everybody" and performs more or less casually absolutely superhuman deeds of valor and achievement with blissful unconcern for his own interest, safety, and comfort. The situation could be seen as a really remarkable, sweeping effect of Lenin's few short articles on Tolstoy upon the Soviet literary scene and socialist realism, were it not that the phenomenon goes quite beyond the possibility of a rational explanation. It is only partly due to directed effort. Apparently, Lenin's articles verbalized an important national, if not universal, need for a literature that contained the folkloric ingredient of vivid realism, simplicity of plot, and romantic typification, with the poet as a balladeer who sings of great events and human ideals and does his best to awake and enlighten the culturally unresponsive mass man with any means available to his talent. He need not furnish psychological motivation and can mix realistic fantasy with reality. His stories must have a simple adventure plot and appealing characters who struggle against great odds to attain a worthwhile goal. They seek a treasure difficult to attain, battling hideous capitalist monsters in the name of communism. Thus, socialist realism, which on the one hand appears outré, contrived, and unimaginative, can on the other hand be said to be a valid effort to create Marxist folklore.

A number of guidelines derived from Lenin's articles on Tolstoy are related to thought control. These have come to be known under the general label of *partiinost'*.[27] The term means a conscious partisan communist attitude, harmony with the party's current instructions relative to the concrete historical situation described, because only the Communist party of the Soviet Union, the modern equivalent of the priestly class—the secret society of learned tutors—is presumed to be at all times in tune with history (destiny). The guidelines are probably set most for the benefit and guidance of critics. The narrow interpretation of alien ideologies is discouraged. So is the view that Soviet literature is a separate "proletarian" category of folklore. The party loyalty of a writer is not examined with emphasis. Marxist dogmatism is discouraged, as are a literal application of Marxist tenets to art, any peremptory inter-

ference by incompetent party functionaries in literary matters, and any attempts to streamline literature. The latest guidelines seem to promote a healthier approach to literature as a tool to inform the people's minds. A critic is to operate from a position of ideological strength. His first task is to establish whether the work will have a positive overall effect—examine what valuable ingredients the literary work contains next to its faults, what issues it promotes—issues which must be either useful to the Marxist cause or contain constructive criticism—regardless of the author's ideological attitudes or affiliations. Finally, he must establish whether or not the work reflects the really significant aspects of reality in its time. His task is thus to establish how well the work fits into the Marxist framework. If, on balance, the work seems positive, he approves of it. If not, he rejects it as onesided and negative. He must, of course, make adjustments for obvious manifestations of a dated ideology from the Marxist point of view of his day.

A further effect of Lenin's Tolstoy articles was greater tolerance toward individualism in the writer whose personal background would not be held against him. His personal foibles, for example, could also be dismissed as subjective and irrelevant. Ideological aberrations could be regarded as relative and peripheral and could be ignored if the work was not affected by them and contained valuable objective features. A writer could no longer be condemned for belonging to the wrong class; he was not to be considered confined to his social background, as he could rise above it by an effort of the will. His consciousness was then no longer entirely the product of his environment for he could influence and change it at will, once he had reached a certain level of enlightenment. This attitude prompted an open door policy of accepting writers with other ideologies if their art was valuable. One effect was a greater tolerance toward fellow travelers who were deemed capable of ideological growth. The insistence on facts and objective, commonplace ideas in massive quantities in a writer's work, eventually paved the road toward acceptance of objective writers with altogether alien ideologies (Bunin), whereas intolerance continued toward so-called subjective writers like Bely, Zamiatin, and, of course, Solzhenitsyn, whose writings strike the Soviets as highly subjective since they project opinions that are greatly at variance with their own. Thus the writer's interpretation remains a matter of supreme importance. It is quite important that the critic's opinions

be correct in every way. A critic's error in interpreting the work is tantamount to an ideological calamity. The situation reflects the Marxists' continuing uneasiness with and desire to bring some kind of order and orientation into the chaotic world of ideas.

Lenin's articles on Tolstoy also further clarified the imperative need for Marxist training for anyone who had to make ideological judgments, as the critic should be thoroughly conversant with current and past standards for judging ideas. A Marxist critic must know how to interpret things in their proper historic perspective if he is to assess their meaning for the future.

The difference, then, between Lenin's and Plekhanov's interpretation of the value of Tolstoy, his work, and life was one of approach. A recent opinion states that "Plekhanov's aesthetics was abandoned not because of any sudden discovery of a truly Marxist aesthetics in Lenin's writings but because Stalin's utilitarian and increasingly dictatorial attitude toward art was closer to Lenin's than to Plekhanov's and could be bolstered by invoking the former's authority."[28] In my opinion this is only partly correct. The statement misses the very real point of the effect a literary work can have on the average reader, the mass man who is the object of indoctrination by literature. So it is the literary work, not its author, that matters most from the Bolshevik point of view. For Lenin writers were men charged with the guidance of the masses. Stalin, who coined the expression "engineers of the soul," obviously agreed. To them the writer's ideology was secondary, something for which he could be prosecuted as a private citizen, whereas for Plekhanov the real issue was the writer as a man who counted first and foremost because his ideas could not be separated from him. So, what for Lenin (and Stalin) was private and peripheral (Tolstoy's prejudicial ideology) was public and central for Plekhanov. According to most Soviet sources, this inability to differentiate between personality and artist is the root of Plekhanov's mistakes. Instead of focusing on the objective, positive aspects of Tolstoy's work, he concentrated on their subjective, negative, unimportant aspects, and remained negative and destructive himself. Lenin accepted Tolstoy despite his prejudices. Plekhanov rejected him because of them. The issues involved here have received over the years an enormous amount of attention in Soviet publications, the extent of which can only be hinted at here.

Soviet sources that praise Lenin's articles on Tolstoy for having laid the cornerstone of Soviet literary scholarship tend to grant

only minimal value to Plekhanov's erudite critiques of Tolstoy. In the West, Struve ("Tolstoy in Soviet Criticism") prefers, on grounds of scholarship, Plekhanov's and Lubov Axelrod-Orthodox's critiques of Tolstoy. He is supported by Zenkovsky, who thinks that Plekhanov is dismissed by the Soviets as a poor thinker arbitrarily, in deference to Lenin (*s legkoi ruki Lenina*).[29] Yet Zenkovsky is not unaware of Plekhanov's unconscious leanings toward philosophic idealism, an absolute anathema to communists. Significantly, Georg Lukács, another recent casualty of Soviet persecution for revisionism, i.e., a tendency to introduce idealistic methods of reasoning, sees, like Plekhanov (and Pisarev long before him) an evolutionary trend[30] in Tolstoy that Lenin did not, as he regarded Tolstoy as almost an object, an automatic recorder of history, rigidly confined to his own time slot. The difference here adumbrates the essential difference between idealist and materialist thinking and is therefore philosophically valid and substantial, rather than arbitrary and dictatorial. The difference is between thinking in rigid and thinking in fluid categories.

The Soviets accuse Plekhanov of using essentially a theoretical argument ("Feuerbachian heresy") against Tolstoy. Here are some of the specific objections: Plekhanov was arbitrary in assessing Tolstoy, whom he did not understand and failed to judge consistently. Plekhanov definitely failed to interpret Tolstoy as an artist and thinker and instead treated the two as an undifferentiated whole. He was dogmatic and peremptory ("everything bears the stamp of sketchiness"). In general he was too subjective to see the objective nature and results of Tolstoy's work. He was wrong to consider Tolstoy's contradictions as contradictions within Tolstoy himself rather than as a reflection of the times. Plekhanov never bothered to correlate these contradictions in Tolstoy to the glaring contradictions in Russian society and continued to treat them in isolation from issues. He decided that Tolstoy was remote from reality purely on the basis of Tolstoy's philosophy. And he made a grave error in claiming that Tolstoy was indifferent to human relations. The effort most objected to by the Soviets is Plekhanov's waste of rhetoric in arguing Tolstoy's philosophy, which they find obviously wrong. All such objections are clearly based on recognition of an abstract base in Plekhanov's thinking. And they also clearly derive from Lenin's articles on Tolstoy.[31]

The subtle differences in Lenin's and Plekhanov's interpretations of Tolstoy, his work, and his message highlight the shadowy

expanse of esoteric variants in points of view between the two major factions of Russian Marxism—the revolutionary Bolsheviks (the pure materialists) and the evolutionary Mensheviks (the contaminated materialists). These differences apparently continue to exist even today, as witness the periodic outbreaks of persecutions for "revisionism," which is treated as an epidemic disease with massive "purification" measures in the form of expulsions and arrests. To the Soviets, who now claim to have gained intellectual stability with their intricate, highly structured, and somewhat dogmatic philosophy of dialectical materialism, Plekhanov stands at an inferior level of communist philosophy. He is seen as a liberal intellectual who was working with the old values of utopian socialism. He is said to have been unable to overcome the mistakes of *narodnichestvo* and to have failed to recognize the full implications of the Marxist-Leninist theory of knowledge. Thus the coolness of Soviet Marxists toward Plekhanov, with his evolutionary individualism and superior intellectual stance, has another and chilling implication related to various forms of a revisionism and the Marxists' implacable hostility toward any kind of philosophical idealism. It has always been the one inexpiable crime for any Marxist, however prominent, to raise himself intellectually above the group, to consider himself, wittingly or unwittingly, abidingly or momentarily, superior to others. Intricate considerations of this kind have always been difficult to understand for the Western mind trained in Aristotelian logic and made it impossible for outsiders to follow the tortuous path of the beleaguered Soviet intellectual in his search for ultimate truth. The diminished or lost prestige of brilliant and original thinkers such as Pisarev, Mikhailovsky, Plekhanov, Trotsky, and Lukacs illustrates the problems faced by honest practitioners of methods of literary criticism that are as involved in pragmatism and as politically motivated as the sociological method. To be appreciated in Soviet Russia, their findings must conform to party guidelines on the current formulaic state of the collective Russian mind, from which deviations are not allowed.

Liberal intellectual Marxism in its civilized Western version tends to dream of a social paradise where there is room for the dissident and the heretic. It seems unable to accept the harsh dialectic of Dostoevsky, the prophetic inventor of the new twentieth-century myth of the perfect state that seems to combine tribal and civilized features of society—a formulaic state of mind and homogenization.

The humanitarian Marxist seems unable to see that in an anthill there is no room for dissidents. Plekhanov had to find out this truth for himself. He awakened in 1918 only to find that his dream did not survive reality, and then he was not only disappointed but crushed, because, unlike his more logical rival, Lenin, he was unable to rationalize the cruel reality of terror tactics that were forcing him and his fellow Russians into a more efficient, sinister version of the old idea of the Russian *narod* as a domesticated swarm of bees. Plekhanov was fortunate in being spared by death from witnessing the further metamorphosis of his dream into a colossal beehive.

CONCLUSION

By and large, most prerevolutionary critics liked the artist but disliked the thinker. Even when the critics thought that the function of the writer was to communicate ideas, they did not like Tolstoy's brand of ideas. His real importance to Russian criticism lies perhaps in a stature large enough to provoke a series of important critics to voice themselves about him. In that sense—paraphrasing Lenin—he can be looked at as the mirror of prerevolutionary criticism. Most important critics found themselves confronted with the enormous bulk of Tolstoy and realized that they had to say something. What they said was often more revealing about them than about Tolstoy, who intrigued them more as a man than as an artist.

They were more interested in the message than in the form of his work. Perhaps the most perplexing problem confronting critics of Tolstoy was to decide whether he merely wrote well about Russia past and present, or was able to find answers to her problems and a message for the future, that is, whether Tolstoy was simply a good storyteller or a prophet. Most critics never satisfactorily resolved this dilemma. Indeed, Tolstoy himself provided the clue to the chronic misinterpretation of his message and suggested why he was so frequently misread: his message was neither social nor ideological but *psychological.* It was an attempt to reconcile civilized man with his shadow—the uncivilized, irrational side of our nature that we must face in order to grow. In Tolstoy's works this inferior side

is laid open with an incisive, psychologically subtle narrative technique, which analyzes the motive factors of consciousness. These are, on the one hand, the will, which can best be regarded as a dynamism subordinated to consciousness, and on the other, compulsion—an unconscious dynamism that replaces our wills by an involuntary motivation or impulse, ranging from mere interest to possession. Tolstoy shows this compulsion to be the great mystery of human life that often thwarts our conscious will and our reason by an inflammable element within us, appearing now as a consuming fire and now as life-giving warmth. Such an undertaking was without substantial precedent in literature and, in the ruling climate of scientific rationalism, it invited meaningful comparisons only with the prescientific past. Next to some quite traditional views set forth by the author it appeared as an attempt to counteract the aims of civilization: to thwart progress and the other comprehensive efforts to deliver man from a bondage to nature. Thus one can say that Tolstoy's psychological message was so new indeed that it seemed old.

The treatment of Tolstoy by his critics should be seen as a phenomenon within a special Russian tradition that presses every writer into the service of his society, as a seer and maker of images furthering its life. In this tradition the writer is expected to suggest new forms of experience by combining traditional elements in an original fashion, as if to try to widen the confines of society that tend to standardize experience within it. He must stimulate memory and imagination, find and recover visions overlooked and chances unrealized, in a continuing effort to construct new models for a better life. His imaginings must be functional in terms of both the past and the future life of society. First, they must represent the meaningful outcome of prior events; second, they must seem symbolic of coming events, seeking to shape a purposeful end with the material at hand. The best writer, accordingly, is not only a mirror but a teacher of life. His ideas foreshadow lines of future social and intellectual development. Whether his images will have limited validity or broad appeal as symbols, however, depends on the viability of his ideas: the more subjective and unusual they are, the more limited their value to society is likely to be, even though it may well be supreme to the individual himself. Under the weight of such expectations, critics were understandably curious to know how via-

ble Tolstoy's images would be, whether he had enough talent and capability to express complex and important ideas, and, most of all, what potential he had as a sage.

Tolstoy's prodigious storytelling skills were never seriously doubted. True, he was often charged with being careless with style, even writing ungrammatically; and some critics wondered what he was doing in his experiments with form. Indeed, some even questioned the merits of Tolstoy's technique of "morbid" psychological analysis while praising the wholesomeness of his art. But that is unimportant in view of the general critical agreement on the value of his lucid writing: he had real power to captivate and enthrall the reader, for he created an imaginary world of unsurpassed clarity and vividness. This skill enabled him to say important things in a most effective manner. On the whole, then, only a minor portion of critical concern pertained to form and Tolstoy's competence as an artist. But if only a few critics examined his art, many more were preoccupied with his ideas and his proposals for curing society's ills. And in this respect they found his work less admirable.

Throughout Tolstoy's lifetime, Russian society encountered awesome problems that required wise and effective solutions as alternatives to a sanguinary revolt. These problems had, of course, two aspects: an outer social one, in which injustice, for example, was objectively seen; and an inner psychological one, relating to the individual, where issues often appeared as ideological. The question had become not only "what to do?" but also "what to think?" about the realities of modern life. Tolstoy's answers to either side of the dual question struck his critics as inadequate.

In part, this disappointment followed from the expectation, in Russian criticism, that literature should provide "types"—fictional characters who throw light on some current problem or significant aspect of contemporary life. The type, in this tradition, is expected to behave as would anyone else in the same difficult or ordinary circumstances, that is, behave normally; hence the type can represent an adaptation to life, thus becoming something of an objective standard of behavior for others either to follow or reject. Discussions on such standards readily transcended the limits of literary criticism. Critics aimed at the real conflict between the individuality of each man and the formation of general rules and models intended to guide many men; for this purpose they examined fic-

tional characters as though they were real people, asking what they would do in a given set of circumstances not depicted in the literary work. Critics differentiated, however, between realistic characters and ideal types who embodied new patterns of desirable future behavior. In particular, pundits at this time were looking for men of action, expecting to find the type of *raznochinets*—practical commoners who rose from a variety of ranks to make an impact upon the social scene with an aggressively materialistic approach to life evolved from a study of natural sciences. Instead, Tolstoy depicted noblemen, idealistic dreamers with a bent toward inaction and contemplation, whose quest for identity the critics belittled, connecting it with the obsolete type of the superfluous man. This interpretation illuminates the pervasive tension between the image Tolstoy created with his characters and the image superimposed upon them by the myopic critics. The quest for identity that dominates the ironic hero, the superfluous man who symbolizes the historically obsolete Russian gentry and the spiritual dichotomy of Russian life, is only superficially similar to the deadly serious Tolstoyan protagonist who "scientifically" strives to connect the lines of communication between the conscious and unconscious zones of human experience. The legacy of the superfluous man, however, gave critics an excuse for many an artistically inappropriate search for civic content, leading to meaningless discussions, skirmishes with the author, and elaborate stratagems to expose his lack of current ideas, all of which pointed to the ultimate importance of ideology in art. Moreover, critics discovered within the apparent type of the Tolstoyan hero an individual of distinctive personality. Some critics claimed that Tolstoy did not create a single type, that all his characters were unique. Some went even further charging that his characters reflected only Tolstoy himself. Furthermore, when they found the characters morally acceptable, reviewers rejected their interests and views as outdated. What could such untypical eccentric characters left over from the past, critics wondered, teach the ordinary modern youth who had to adjust to a changing society?

A brief survey will recapitulate the critics' concerns. I will discuss the problems they perceived in two steps: first, chronologically, in their social dimension; and then, as psychological or ideological dilemmas.

At first there were relatively few major changes in Russian society, and adjustment to them was not an overwhelming problem. In

the 1850s and 1860s the three burning issues were the freeing of the serfs, the conflict between the old establishment and the *raznochintsy,* and nihilism. Reviewers saw none of these subjects treated in young Tolstoy's works. The landlord-serf relations, powerfully rendered in "A Landowner's Morning" and "Polikushka," and the typically Tolstoyan moral contrast of peasant (good) versus gentry (bad) adumbrated in "Three Deaths" were seen as mere Slavophile sentiment. The message was moral, rather than social and Tolstoy never mentioned the need to free the serfs. Although the various states of mind and psychological problems of his protagonists were in most cases projected against a contemporary background, the relevance of the issues raised and characters portrayed to any social issue was tenuous or incidental. Critics found the untypical nature of socially irrelevant elements in Tolstoy's work so typical of Tolstoy that they labeled him a subjective writer. With the publication of *War and Peace,* which began in 1865, he also acquired a reputation as a historical novelist who promoted nostalgia for obsolete patterns of life.

In the later part of the century, however, these problems began to snowball. In the 1870s and 1880s the stale Westernizer/Slavophile controversy was turning into a nasty political issue as an ideological confrontation between Russia and the West. Immediate attention was focused on the *narodniki,* whose program included humanitarian causes, the rights of the individual, and the dignity of the common man. Their program was rational and abstract, yet it included ideas of an antithetical nature, irrational suppositions about the Russian peasant in archaic village communes as a great "teacher of life." The *narodniki* inherited these notions from the Slavophiles, whose labors were forever directed toward revealing the as yet unmanifest "whole man" in the Russian peasant, chosen for moral leadership as at once the greater and the future man of Europe and Asia. The *narodniki* pursued this dream of the Slavophiles by "going among the people" to establish bridgeheads of the educated among the ignorant folk. Although their utopian illusions about the people often led to disaster, as men of action they continued to carry out their program. Meeting the *muzhik* face to face, teaching him to cope with an increasingly complex outer life and learning from him the mystic secret of a harmonious inner life, became their most important concern. Tolstoy dealt with this baffling phenomenon in "The Divine and the Human," where he depicted the tragic fate of the millionnaire Lisogub who, like

thousands of others, went to live with the peasants in their wretched villages. But this true story and the fictional story of Levin in *Anna Karenina* were acidly reviewed as *narodnik* and Slavophile, as marred by mysticism and irrelevance to social issues.

By the latter part of the nineteenth century Russia's internal problems were legion. The major issues now were industrialization, burgeoning capitalism, exploitation of labor, communism, anarchism, and terrorism. These were attended by a host of other problems such as the constant splitting off of a nihilistic element on the extreme left, whose program was absolutely hostile to culture. On the extreme right these developments elicited violence, suppression, bigotry, and other reactionary barbarian patterns. And as if these were not enough, they were followed by broad economic distress and disturbing changes in the structure of society: peasants fleeing the countryside; deteriorating patterns of village life; a declining sense of kinship; insanely self-centered, infantile, pleasure-seeking parents; abandoned, battered, killed, or suicidal children; clumsily aborted babies dotting the bottoms of ravines; and so forth—all of which bore dramatic witness to a seriously disturbed mental condition in many people and a crisis in the national consciousness. Although Tolstoy, in this period, had organized some famine relief, his unctuous pacifism and vague Christian anarchism drew fire from his critics as insensitivity to the situation, whereas his refusal to write any more fiction annoyed them. The occasional pieces of fiction he produced struck critics as remote from reality, dealing only with universals. He was accused of quietism. It was said that, being satisfied with a medieval life, he had no need to relate to the present and its experiments, just so long as he received homage.

Indeed, Tolstoy appeared unmoved by Russia's current "struggle with the West" and the saber-rattling rhetoric of Pan-Slavism, which endeavored to present Russia as the rescuer of oppressed nations. His staunchest supporters disagreed with him on this issue, although not long before they had praised *War and Peace* as a perfect vehicle for the promulgation of Russia's message of moral regeneration. Understandably, the opposition was more critical: although endorsing very different ideologies, Dostoevsky and Plekhanov agreed insofar as they both tried to expose Tolstoy as a reactionary whose thoughts about the common man left much to be desired, being the traditional thoughts of hidebound aristocrats.

Tolstoy's views on the ideological aspects of these issues fared no better. They suited neither side of an eschatological debate that raged for decades over the causes of Russia's acute crisis of consciousness. Adherents of a rational approach to history blamed him for mysticism, whereas proponents of intuitive wisdom accused him of rationalism.

The controversial Russian message of moral regeneration bears a curious resemblance to Tolstoy's international plea for moral renewal. Yet, despite widespread popular support, the latter received almost no understanding or support from Russian critics, who dismissed it as mysticism. They thought that the causes of moral problems were external, not within man.

In this controversy about the ability of Russians to cope with civilization, in which the entire intelligentsia participated, the crisis was defined primarily as a crisis of the intellect. The basic issue was how much training in directed thinking Russians could take before they lost their mental balance and intuitive virtues. Slavophile critics came out in opposition to European enlightenment on grounds that it made man rely too much on his reason to the detriment of feeling. They also claimed that Russia could not absorb, nor did she want, Western civilization, pointing out that a society can accommodate only that level of progress which it has developed and has begun to understand. But others, especially those who appreciated reason as an effective tool of controlling nature, disagreed. They were ethical rationalists who, disgusted with the melancholy picture of Russian life, wanted to improve it through enlightenment. They endorsed a broad social movement whose aim was not merely to raise or lower political rights to the same general level but, more hopefully, to abolish unhappiness altogether, with external regulations and egalitarian reforms. They were satisfied that what Russians wanted most was to improve their minds and learn to think ("to think, rather than to feel" is a slogan that figures prominently in the writings of the leading radical nihilist Pisarev; see chap. 2). Exasperated by the irrationality of the common man, they were determined to end it through education. They denied the role of the irrational as a significant cause of man's problems and looked for their solution outside of man, believing that everything highest and lowest was external. Civilization, and a rational view of life, meant an escape from mysticism. They had great disdain for mysticism, by which they meant everything and anything that was in-

explicable. The Slavophiles, on the other hand, warned that rapid changes in society could in themselves be responsible for the aberrant behavior of its citizens, declaring that progress enforced by will was always convulsive, and backwardness was closer to naturalness. Of course, the progressives could refer to such claims in scarcely flattering terms, since they appeared as attempts to retard man. They scorned Slavophile inertia, backwardness, faultfinding, timidity, and pettiness. They said it was nothing but naturalism, meaning a complete surrender to one's instincts. They supposed that the instincts had a constant downward tendency, and that naturalism amounts to an unethical sliding down an inclined plane. The Slavophiles countered that the retarding ideal, although more primitive, was also more natural, therefore beneficial, and more moral in that it kept faith with tradition. They pointed out that one is bound to observe that the man who is left to his own devices, and has therefore every opportunity for sliding downward, as for instance the primitive, not only has a moral code but one that in the severity of its demands is often considerably more exacting than our civilied morality; whereas the progressive ideal is more abstract, and seems more unnatural and less "moral," in that it demands disloyalty to tradition and becomes destructive. Critics opposed to rationalism welcomed democratic reason as a source of freedom and equality, but said that it could not perfect life and was in many ways hostile to life, as, for instance, in nihilism, which they related to negativism, a sterile and destructive analytical trend that came to prominence in Russia with Gogol's, and in Europe with Schopenhauer's, work. These writers had voiced what was obscurely felt by many Russians: not only the causes of the intellectual malaise of modern man, but also their profound feeling of a mystical identity with the world, an appeal they shared with Stirner and Nietzsche. Nihilism—as the extreme form of negativism—inspired an unbridled craving for individualistic supremacy and pleasure in naked egoism, a revolt against the conventional moral atmosphere, and a desire to shatter all moral and cultural foundations. All this had its source in rationalism, said the Slavophiles; and inasmuch as reason, when highly developed, can separate man from his own roots in instinct and tradition (they called it castration), it may cause him to be swept by the irrational to catastrophe. The one-sidedness of the pure rationalist takes the form of demonic compulsion; it has something of the character of going ber-

serk or running amok. In all cases it presupposes an atrophy of instinct that is not found in the true primitive, for which reason he is in general still free from the one-sidedness of the cultural barbarian.

Remarkably many Russian critics of every persuasion believed that any civilization without a strong moral or ideological content was doomed, or they held some other such eschatological belief. The Slavophiles confidently predicted a physical catastrophe—a revolution—soon to befall the West unless moral regeneration were speedily effected there. They expressed the belief that the mentally sophisticated European bourgeoisie was headed toward "moral philistinism," a functional disease of the mind, a kind of moral idiocy that resulted from overdeveloped logical thinking at the expense of morally discriminating intuition. Some even went so far as to declare Western civilization a new form of barbarism that relied entirely on external standards (law) with practically no inner moral standards (grace). Of course, the Russian rationalists believed that moral transformation could be managed without religion; but they held firm convictions about the need for some kind of collective attitude equivalent to religion as the guiding principle in life, usually an evolutionary political theory based in history and national necessity. The antirationalists, on the other hand, insisted on religion as the only means to provide moral standards both within and without. Thus they amended this idea in Pan-Slavism, which included Russian Orthodoxy but, to all intents and purposes, was a political doctrine that promised to renew life in Europe with Russia's moral leadership. This leadership was to come from the naïve but open Russian mind that would guide the sophisticated but closed European mind toward regeneration. This was the extent of the Russian message of the "whole man," who echoes the "homo totus" of the Western and the Chèn-yên (true man) of Chinese alchemy, the round primordial being who represents the greater man within, the Anthropos who is akin to God, and whom Tolstoy depicted in Platon Karataev (*War and Peace*). This inner man, primitive but harmonious, is of necessity partly unconscious, because consciousness is only part of a man and cannot comprehend the whole. But the whole man is always present, even in the European, for his fragmentation is nothing but an effect of his hyperconscious mind—his rationalism, which insists on dealing only with rational ideas. This whole inner man would reveal to the

European "superman," with his purely outward-oriented pursuits, the true meaning of life, which is a moral one and which the latter had lost by ignoring the irrational sources of inspiration that reason scorns. Although Tolstoy often said very similar things, his message was misunderstood and rejected on both sides of the debate. Apparently it was too symbolic. His explorations of the irrational side of human nature were seen as an unfortunate tendency to descend to primitive levels of thought. His call for a religiosity that would be based not on external ritual but on inner moral standards was interpreted as ethical nihilism and an attempt to do away with tradition and develop a new and personal heretical doctrine. Finally, Tolstoy's efforts to present the outer-directed hero, the dynamic man of action and empire builder (Napoleon) as obsolete, and to introduce the inner-directed antihero (Karataev, Kutuzov) and men of reflection (Prince Andrei, Pierre, Levin) as the psychological heroes of the future met with either complete misapprehension and perplexity, or attempts to interpret these men as *potential* men of action (cf. the various comments on Prince Andrei and Pierre as potential Decembrists, and Levin as a *narodnik*). Throughout his long career Tolstoy was pursued with one and the same persistent advice: stop writing messages and concentrate on writing fiction, which is the only thing you can do well. All the while, of course, message was of utmost concern for the critics, but their own message only. Such advice suggests that Tolstoy's critics lacked the very qualities they wanted him to have: prophetic perspicacity and an ability to foresee the lines of future social and intellectual development, qualities that are abundantly in evidence in an examination of both the content and form of Tolstoy's work.

NOTES

PREFACE

1. Andrei Bely [Boris Bugaev], *Tragediia tvorchestva: Dostoevsky i Tolstoy,* p. 36.

2. V. Zelinsky, ed., *Russkaia kriticheskaia literatura o proizvedeniiakh L. N. Tolstogo; O religii L'va Tolstogo.*

3. N. G. Sheliapina et al., eds., *Bibliografiia literatury o L. N. Tolstom.*

CHAPTER ONE

1. Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies,* p. 172.

2. This question has been thoroughly researched by Eric Havelock in his definitive study *Preface to Plato.*

3. A. V. Druzhinin, *Sobranie sochinenii,* 7:581.

4. I. S. Turgenev, "Predislovie k romanam," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem,* 12:303.

5. According to a recent researcher, Rolf-Dieter Kluge, this was the point of transition from critical to socialist realism (*Vom kritischen zum sozialistischen Realismus*).

6. Victor Terras, *Belinskij in Russian Literary Criticism,* p. 226.

7. P. Miliukov, "Razlozhenie slavianofil'stva," *Iz istorii intelligentsii,* p. 303.

8. Havelock, *Preface to Plato,* p. 142; Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth;* Mircea Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane;* and C. G. Jung, "The Archaic Man," *Modern Man in Search of a Soul,* pp. 125–51.

9. Belief here is to be understood as equivalent to incomplete understanding—a substitute for the missing knowledge of empirical reality.

10. René Wellek and Austin Warren also comment on this, saying that "man in the middle ages feared sudden death most, as it precluded preparation and repentance, while Montaigne begins to think that a quick death is best. He has lost the Christian view that death is the aim of life" (*Theory of Literature,* p. 105).

11. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind,* p. 263 and passim.

12. G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind.*

13. Zenkovsky, 1:40–41.

14. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Russkaia ideia.*

15. Popper, p. 172.

16. Attempts to explain the special meaning of this word for the Russians can be found in many places. For a representative attempt, see F. M. Dostoevsky, *Diary of a Writer,* where he condemns Tolstoy for trying to make Russians feel like Europeans, i.e., rootless people who have become detached from their tribe (for details see chap. 3 below).

17. Cf. the informative study by Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People.*

18. "O kritike," written in 1830 but unpublished until 1928, rpt. in A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh,* 7:159–60. See also "O zhurnal'noi kritike," *Literaturnaia gazeta,* no. 3, 11 January 1830, rpt. in Pushkin, 7:98–99; and "Razgovor o kritike," unpublished until 1884, rpt. ibid., pp. 99–101.

19. The interested reader may wish to consult Valerii Briusov's "Kliuchi tain" [Keys to the occult] and V. Ivanov's "Simvolizm kak miroponimanie."

20. The swamp is the devil's abode in Russian folklore (cf. *bolotnyi chort*).

21. This issue is the subject of Iu. N. Tynianov's major study *Arkhaisty i novatory* [Archaists and innovators].

22. B. Eikhenbaum, *Molodoi Tolstoy.*

23. Cf. Ludwig Kahn, *Literatur und Glaubenskrise.*

24. Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel,* pp. 151–52.

CHAPTER TWO

1. N. A. Dobroliubov, *Sobranie sochinenii* [Collected works], 7:241.

2. A. I. Herzen, "Kontsy i nachala. Pis'mo piatoe," *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem,* 15:280.

3. N. A. Nekrasov, "Zametki o zhurnalakh za sentiabr' 1855 g.," *Sovremennik* 10 (October 1855); rpt. in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 98:332.

4. N. A. Nekrasov, "Zametki o zhurnalakh. Sevastopol' v avguste 1855 g.," *Sovremennik* 3 (March 1856); rpt. in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 9:372–73.

5. When Tolstoy's "Two Hussars" was published in the *Contemporary* (May 1856), the weekly *Son of the Fatherland* branded it one of the worst and most sterile manifestations of the negative trend in Russian literature (*Syn otechestva,* 6 May 1856, pp. 15–18). But when Chernyshevsky spoke of it as one of the best stories to appear in 1856 ("Zametki o zhurnalakh," *Sovremennik* 12 [December 1856]: 257; rpt. in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*), and

after he pointed to the picture of the young girl in the window in "Two Hussars" as "a charming and pure example of Tolstoy's art" ("Detstvo i Otrochestvo. Voennye rasskazy grafa L. N. Tolstogo," *Sovremennik* 12 [December 1856]: 53–64; rpt. in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*), *Son of the Fatherland* reversed itself and declared "Two Hussars' to be a beautiful story, "one of the best to come out during the past year" (*Syn otechestva,* 27 January 1857, p. 74) and "beautiful pictures" to be Tolstoy's forte (10 February 1857, p. 139).

6. Soviet critics show continuing interest in Chernyshevsky's reviews of Tolstoy, as Gleb Struve has shown ("Tolstoy in Soviet Criticism").

7. "Detstvo i Otrochestvo."

8. "Rasskazy grafa L. N. Tolstogo," *Sovremennik* 1 (January 1857): 166–73.

9. "Zamechatel'nyi khudozhnik i tonkii psikholog . . . Vdumchivost' avtora v samye tonkie perezhivaniia rebenka" ["A remarkable artist and a fine psychologist . . . The author can identify and reproduce the finest shadings of a child's emotions"] (B. A.[lmazov], "Sovremennik 1854 goda"); "Zamechatel'noe masterstvo analiza pochti neulovimykh chuvstv i perezhivanii" ["A remarkable skill of analyzing almost imperceptible feelings and experiences"] ("Russkaia literatura").

10. "Avtor dovodit chitatelia neoslabnoi proverkoi vsego vstrechaiushchegosia emu do ubezhdeniia, chto v odnom zheste, v neznachitel'noi privychke, v neobdumannom slove cheloveka skryvaetsia inogda dusha ego" ["By relentlessly checking over everyting that occurs, the author brings the reader to the point of believing that a person's soul hides sometimes in one gesture, an insignificant habit, a thoughtlessly uttered word"] (P. V. Annenkov, "O mysli v proizvedeniiakh iziashchnoi slovesnosti").

11. B. Ia. Edelshtein, "Vnutrennii monolog u L. N. Tolstogo i A. P. Chekhova"; I. V. Strakov, "Vnutrenniaia rech' v izobrazhenii A. P. Chekhova."

12. A. Tseitlin, *Masterstvo Pushkina,* p. 143.

13. V. Manuilov, *M. Iu. Lermontov,* p. 41.

14. A. Lezhnev, "Mysli vslukh," pp. 42–46.

15. A. Skaftymov, "O psikhologizme v tvorchestve Stendalia i Tolstogo," pp. 282–94.

16. T. A. Motyleva, "Po sledam polemiki."

17. K. V. Driagin, "O dialektike i Tolstom."

18. M. Vitenson, "K voprosu o sotsialisticheskom realizme."

19. B. G. Anan'ev, "K teorii vnutrennei rechi v psikhologii"; I. V. Strakhov, "Struktura vnutrennikh monologov v tvorchestve L. N. Tolstogo."

20. I. V. Strakhov, "Psikhologiia snovidenii" and "L. N. Tolstoy kak psikholog."

21. I. V. Strakhov, "Kharakter i ego ustoichivye vyrazitel'nye priznaki v izobrazhenii L. N. Tolstogo" and *L. N. Tolstoy kak psikholog.*

22. "Esli eto—pervoe proizvedenie g. L. N., to nel'zia ne pozdravit' russkuiu literaturu s poiavleniem novogo zamechatel'nogo talanta!" ["If this is Mr. L. N.'s first work, then one cannot help but congratulate Russian literature on the appearance of a new and remarkable talent"] (S. S. Dudyshkin, "Kritika").

23. "Peterburgskii vestnik."

24. "Russkaia iziashchnaia literatura v 1852 g.," p. 36.

25. "Otrochestvo."

26. "Krainosti psikhicheskogo analiza" ["Excesses of psychological analysis"] (Apollon Grigor'ev, "Obozrenie nalichnykh literaturnykh deiatelei," *Moskvitianin* 10 (October 1855): 187). Cf. also later pertinent assessments, such as "S imenem L. N. Tolstogo sviazyvaetsia predstavlenie o pisatele, kotoryi obladaet darom chrezvychaino tonkogo analiza" ["Tolstoy's name is associated with the notion of a writer who has the gift of extraordinarily refined analysis"] (P. V. Annenkov, "Sovremennaia belletristika"); and "Vse tvorchestvo Tolstogo s nachala do kontsa pronizano takim 'chrezmerno-tonkim analizom' po vyrazheniiu naivnogo Druzhinina" ["Tolstoy's entire output from beginning to end is shot through with such 'excessively refined analysis,' to use the expression of the naïve Druzhinin"] (R. V. Ivanov-Razumnik, "Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy," *Istorii russkoi literatury XIX veka,* 5:393).

27. "Sovershennaia trivial'nost'" ["Utterly trivial"] ("Zhurnalistika," p. 16).

28. "Net idei" ["There are no ideas"] ("Zhurnalistika. Otrochestvo").

29. "Kartiny bez mysli i soderzhaniia" ["Pictures devoid of thought and content"] ("Metel'. Rasskaz gr. L. N. Tolstogo").

30. "Net nikakoi mysli i tseli" ["Thought and orientation are totally absent"] ("Obzor literaturnykh izdanii," p. 138).

31. "Detstvo i otrochestvo," pp. 62–63.

32. "Tolstoy s zamechatel'nym masterstvom vosproizvodit ne tol'ko vneshniuiu obstanovku byta poselian, no, chto gorazdo vazhnee, ikh vzgliad na veshchi. On umeet pereseliat'sia v dushu poselianina—ego muzhik chrezvychaino veren svoei nature—v rechakh ego muzhika net prikras, net ritoriki, poniatiia krest'ian peredaiutsia u grafa Tolstogo s takoiu zhe pravdivost'iu i rel'efnost'iu, kak kharaktery nashikh soldat" ["With remarkable skill Tolstoy reproduces not only the external conditions of the villiagers' daily life but—what is much more important—their view of things. He knows how to dwell inside the villager's soul—his peasant is extraordinarily true to his own nature—his peasant's speech has neither adornments, nor rhetoric, Count Tolstoy reproduces the peasants' concepts with the same accuracy and plasticity that he used in reproducing the characters of our soldiers"] ("Rasskazy grafa L. N. Tolstogo," p. 168).

33. Letter to Nekrasov dated 5 December 1856; N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 16:330.

34. Letter to I. S. Turgenev dated 7 January 1857; ibid., p. 332.

35. "S rasshireniem sfery rasskaza rasshiriaetsia i vzgliad avtora. S novymi litsami vnosiatsia i novye simpatii v ego poeziiu, eto vidit kazhdyi, pripominaia stseny universitetskoi zhizni Irten'eva" ["As the scope of the story widens, so does the author's outlook. New characters introduce also new interests into his art, as anyone can see who remembers the scenes from Irten'ev's university life"] ("Rasskazy grafa L. N. Tolstogo," p. 167).

36. I am translating "chistota nravstvennogo chuvstva" not verbatim as "purity of moral sentiment" but as "wholesomeness" because such a meaning is borne out by the various contextual connotations, all of which have "wholesomeness" as their common denominator.

37. "Detstvo i Otrochestvo. Voennye rasskazy," p. 55. Subsequent page references in the text of this chapter identify passages of this article from which my translations are made.

38. Cf. Gleb Struve, "*Monologue Interieur*."

39. René Wellek quotes Chernyshevsky as saying "'with us, literature constitutes the whole intellectual life of the nation.' In Russia then, writers and poets should feel their obligations a thousand times more strongly than in the West" (*A History of Modern Criticism*, 4:242).

40. Cf., e.g., the notorious sinister label a "great artist but a poor thinker."

41. V. G. Belinsky's famous vicious letter to half-mad Gogol on account of his inept *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* is a good example of this sort of "guidance."

42. His disapproval is quite clear from his one article on Tolstoy's pedagogical activities, written at Tolstoy's own request, and for which Tolstoy supplied him with all the information he needed: N. G. Chernyshevsky, "Iasnaia Poliana. Shkola. Zhurnal pedagogicheskii, izdavaemyi gr. L. N. Tolstym. Moskva, 1862 g. Iasnaia Poliana. Knizhki dlia detei. Knizhka I i II. Sovremennoe obozrenie. Novye knigi" (*Sovremennik* 3 [March 1862]; 122–38). Tolstoy never forgave him for this and ignored Chernyshevsky for the rest of his life.

43. There exists a short reference by M. A. Antonovich to *Anna Karenina* in 1878, where he dismissed the novel as "a classic example of tendentiousness and quietism" ("Sovremennoe sostoianie literatury").

44. [A. F. Golovachev], "Kazaki. Kavkazskaia povest' grafa L. N. Tolstogo."

45. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* lists him as the "foremost representative of Russian Nihilism." Cf. also Armand Coquart, *Dmitri Pisarev et l'idéologie du nihilisme russe*.

46. Strictly speaking he was not one himself but a nobleman, and "un jeune homme bien élevé" to boot. The information is pertinent as an example of Pisarev's predilection for assuming lowly guises.

47. The three reviews are: "'Tri smerti,' rasskaz grafa L. N. Tolstogo," Rassvet 12 (December 1859): 63–74; "Promakhi nezreloi mysli," *Russkoe slovo* 12 (December 1864): 1–56; and "Staroe barstvo. 'Voina i mir,'

sochinenie gr. L. N. Tolstogo," *Otechestvennye zapiski* 2 (February 1868); 263–91 (all are reprinted in *Sochineniia D. I. Pisareva*).

48. For a Marxist assessment of Pisarev, see V. Goldiner, "Pisarev."

49. Aesthetic assessments can be found in Pisarev's articles even after he began to deny any value in aesthetics. See Wellek, 4:258.

50. V. P. Kranikhfel'd, "Dmitrii Ivanovich Pisarev," *Istoriia russkoi literatury XIX Veka*, 3:218.

51. Numerous attacks on Pisarev in the *Contemporary* by M. A. Antonovich followed Pisarev's 1865 essay "The Destruction of Aesthetics." For details see Osval'd Likhtenshtadt's pamphlet *Realisticheskie protivorechiia*.

52. The Russian meaning of the word *pathos* differs from its English meaning as a personal or emotional element in art. For the Russians the word denotes such attitudes as passionate involvement, inspiration, and enthusiasm on the part of the addresser.

53. Official Soviet sources tend to confine Pisarev's aesthetics to the 1860s. See V. D. Skvoznikov, "Pisarev," *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia*, 5:758.

54. L. A. Plotkin, *D. I. Pisarev*, pp. 166, 173–75, 178.

55. Iu. S. Sorokin, introduction to D. I. Pisarev, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh*, 1:xi, xlii, lvi.

56. S. I. Karaban, "Literaturno-kriticheskie vzgliady Pisareva," *Uchenye zapiski kafedry literatury Minskogo Gosudarstvennogo Pedagogicheskogo Instituta*, 2:3 ff.

57. E. N. Medynsky, *Istoriia pedagogiki v sviazi s ekonomicheskim razvitiem obshchestva*, 3:285–86.

58. M. F. Beliaev, *D. I. Pisarev ob interese*, p. 113.

59. N. F. Poznansky, "Pedagogicheskoe nasledie D. I. Pisareva."

60. Fredric Jameson, "Metacommentary," p. 11.

61. Cf., e.g., Pisarev's "Posmotrim," *Sochineniia D. I. Pisareva*, 5:173.

62. He borrowed the postulate from Chernyshevsky's thesis on *The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality*, which he discusses in his article "The Destruction of Aesthetics," *Sochineniia*, 4:119–21.

63. For example, he was hard on Pushkin, Goethe, and other great poets with a relatively weak social message, and lenient on Chernyshevsky's notoriously unartistic "novel of education" *What Is To Be Done?* for the significant social ideas expressed there. For details see "Realisty," "Pushkin i Belinsky," and other essays in Pisarev's *Sochineniia*.

64. He claimed, e.g., that Beethoven and Raphael were the peers of a great Parisian cook (*Sochineniia*, 4:119–21). Satirical references to this "outrageous" idea are found in I. S. Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and F. M. Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*.

65. To Pisarev knowledge of reality meant science. The man who fits Pisarev's label of "thinking realist" is a scientist. Pisarev's attitude accounts

for the exalted status he assigned to intelligence, in all its connotations, both as message and as ability to understand and store information, i.e., education.

66. This is why Pisarev's writings leave one with the impression that he has a poorly developed capacity for differentiating between thinking and being, art and reality. René Wellek makes this point in his essay on Pisarev in *A History of Modern Criticism*, vol. 4.

67. "Ia postoianno staralsia i staraius' do sikh por prevratit' iskusstvo v orudie realizma" ["I have continually tried, and am trying still to convert art into a tool of realism"] ("Posmotrim," p. 188).

68. Dobroliubov explained his method in "Zabitye liudi" and "Luch sveta v temnom tsarstve." See *Sochineniia*, various editions.

69. By his own admission it was a drastic change in views ("Promakhi," *Sochineniia*, 4:199). Soviet scholars, who are always keenly aware of such things, place the change somewhere between writing the first and second halves of his article "Skholastika XIX veka," i.e., between May and September 1861, when Pisarev, then twenty-one, "suddenly became radicalized," i.e., became inspired with his own message and wanted to beam his own "word" and have his own way—in a word, be a sage himself. For details see V. Pereverzev, "Esteticheskie vzgliady Pisareva."

70. Apparently inspired by Dobroliubov's very well known article "What Is 'Oblomovitis'?" (1859).

71. His intention, however, is open to doubt. There was no objective reason for him to delay the examination of any of the major characters of *War and Peace*, who were already well defined in the first three volumes of the book.

72. Thomas G. Masaryk, for example, as René Wellek points out, compares Pisarev with Nietzsche and even Max Stirner in his book *Rusko a Evropa*, 2:112–14.

73. Cf., e.g., Pisarev's article "Pushkin i Belinsky" (1865).

74. Cf. Ralph E. Matlaw, introduction to *Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobroliubov*, p. xix.

75. As Wellek put it, "Some of Pisarev's statements against art and esthetics were undoubtedly rhetorical flourishes, polemical extravagances designed to shock the reader (épater le bourgeois). But I think Pisarev is quite serious in his rejection of art: he must be grouped with a long list of thinkers that begins with Plato . . ." (4:256).

76. See his article "Idealizm Platona" (1861), in which he expounded the "practical applications" of Platonian thinking to current problems (*Sochineniia*, 1:257–80).

77. Cf. his detailed elucidations of the ideas of Büchner, Vogt, Moleschott, Comte, Darwin, Huxley, et al., whose statements he used to support his own ideas (*Sochineniia*, passim). Soviet scholars invariably refer to these as "vulgar," i.e., insensitive to the subtleties of dialectical materialism.

78. V. D. Kirpotin, "D. I. Pisarev"; A. A. Plotkin, *Pisarev i literaturno-obshchestvennoe dvizhenie shestidesiatykh godov*.

79. Denisov being overlooked, as it happened to at least one reviewer of this essay. René Wellek rates it as showing "a definite decline of Pisarev's powers. 'The Old Nobility' of Pisarev's title includes merely two [*sic*] characters of the novel . . . who are used to show up the crudely scheming, ambitious, spoilt, and lazy old aristocracy" (4:264).

CHAPTER THREE

1. B. A[lmazov], "Sovremennik 1854 goda."

2. K. S. Aksakov, "Obozrenie sovremennoi literatury."

3. V. G. Avseenko, "Ocherki tekushchei literatury. Graf L. N. Tolstoy"; "Po povodu novogo romana gr. Tolstogo"; and "Literaturnoe obozrenie," p. 3.

4. N. F. Shcherbina, writing under the name Omega, "Pis'mo iz Moskvy."

5. Evgeniia Tur [Elizabeth, Countess Salias de Tournemir], "Kazaki. Kavkazskaia povest' 1852 g. grafa L. N. Tolstogo."

6. V. P. Meshchersky, *Anna Karenina pod nozhom kritiki.*

7. P. A. Viazemsky, "Vospominaniia o 1812 gode."

8. A. E. Norov, *Voina i mir 1805–1812 gg. s istoricheskoi tochki zreniia i po vospominaniiam sovremennika*; M. I. Dragomirov, "Voina i mir gr. Tolstogo s voennoi tochki zreniia"; and N. Lachinov, "Voina i mir. Po povodu poslednego romana gr. Tolstogo."

9. Orest F. Miller, *Publichnye lektsii Oresta Millera, Russkie pisateli posle Gogolia*, "Genial'naia manilovshchina," and "Filosofiia gr. Tolstogo."

10. M. S. Gromeka, *Poslednie proizvedeniia gr. L. N. Tolstogo.*

11. See Renato Poggioli, *Rozanov.*

12. V. V. Rozanov, *N. N. Strakhov*, p. 57.

13. Ibid., p. 184.

14. V. V. Rozanov, *Literaturnye ocherki*, p. 215.

15. K. Leont'ev, *Analiz, stil' i veianie: O romanakh gr. L. N. Tolstogo.*

16. I do not know whether Merezhkovsky had access to the manuscript, which was finished by 1891.

17. This was a term coined and made popular by Apollon Grigor'ev. It was used by adherents of various organic trends in thought, especially the organic critics, in a variety of connotations. In this context it is probably best translated as "atmosphere."

18. Evidently the nature of the theory has remained obscure to practically everybody outside the inner circle of its adherents. It was not recognized even by the brilliant twentieth-century philosopher Berdiaev, who dismissed it offhand as Dostoevsky's minor aberration. He apparently did not suspect that Dostoevsky's entire weltanschauung, and not only his art, was rooted in the organic premise and the aesthetics derived from it (Nikolai Berdiaev, *Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo*).

19. The organic critics were neither the originators nor even the principal exponents of many of these premises. Apollon Grigor'ev's (as well as

Belinsky's) organic aesthetics are derived in their entirety from the aesthetic philosophy of German objective idealism (Schelling, the Schlegel brothers, and Hegel), perhaps partly via Carlyle. German *Organismusaesthetik*, in turn, rests very largely on Plotinus. For details, see Oskar Walzel, *Grenzen von Poesie and Unpoesie*, and M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Strakhov admits that "Obshchie nachala kritiki Ap. Grigor'eva ochen prosty i obshcheizvestny, ili, po krainei mere, dolzhny byt' pochitaemy obshcheizvestnymi. Eto te glubokie nachala, kotorye zaveshchany nam nemetskim idealizmom" ["The General premises of Apollon Grigor'ev's critical method are very simple and generally known, or, at least, should be considered generally known. They are those profound premises that were bequeathed to us by German idealism"] (N. N. Strakhov, *Kriticheskie stat'i ob I. S. Turgeneve i L. N. Tolstom*, pp. 242–43).

20. There have been several attempts to unravel the organic theory. It is explained by Dmytro Chyzhevs'kyi, *Hegel in Russland*, pt. 3, chap. 2; Ralph E. Matlaw, introduction to Apollon Grigoryev, *My Literary and Moral Wanderings*, pp. xxviii–xliii; Robert L. Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form*; Linda Gerstein, *Nikolai Strakhov*, pp. 26–28, 88–90, and passim; V. V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, 1:400–406; Ellen Chances, "Literary Criticism and the Ideology of *Pochvennichestvo* in Dostoevsky's Thick Journals *Vremia* and *Epokha*"; and Wayne Dowler, "Echoes of *Pochvennichestvo* in Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914*." Nowhere, however, are the central premises of the theory adequately accounted for; the majority of the works discuss only its peripheral aspects as an art theory or a social scheme. Dowler comments that "no comprehensive study of *pochvennichestvo* has been published in any language" (p. 111 n. 6).

21. Leonid Grossman wrote a long essay on Grigor'ev as a precursor of Bergsonian philosophy (*Tri sovremennika: Dostoevsky, Tiutchev, Grigor'ev*).

22. This point is astutely made by Vladimir Nabokov (who himself might qualify as an intellectual philistine in Grigor'ev's scale of values) in his very elegant study *Nikolai Gogol*, p. 71.

23. Apollon Grigor'ev, "Iavleniia sovremennoi literatury propushchennye nashei kritikoi. Gr. L. N. Tolstoy i ego sochineniia: voennye rasskazy, Detstvo, Otrochestvo, Yunost'—pervaia polovina, Zapiski markera, Miatel', Dva gusara, Vstrecha v otriade, Liutsern, Al'bert, Tri smerti, Semeinoe schast'e," *Vremia* 1 (January 1862): 1–30; ibid. 9 (September 1862): 1–27; reprinted in various collections, e.g., Zelinsky, 1:155–208.

24. A. A. Grigor'ev, *Literaturnaia kritika*, p. 513. Subsequent translations from this work are identified by page number.

25. The etymology of the word *pochva* permits such an interpretation. It is analyzed as follows by A. G. Preobrazhensky: "Pochva, R. pochvy *verkhnii sloi zemli, grunt*, knizh., v nar. iazyke neizvestno (obykn. govoriat: zemlia, grunt); dial. olon.podoshva; pochvennyi, bez-. Po mneniiu Potebni (Et., 4, 82), preobrazovano iz p"d"shva. (sm. podoshva). Eto ob"iasnenie razdeliaet Pogodin (*Sledy*, 202, prim.): v semaziol. otnoshenii interesno olon. pochva podoshva" ["*Pochva*, a word of Russian origin, denotes the upper layer of the earth, the ground. Bookish, in popular idiom unknown (the people

usually say *zemlia, grunt*); dialectal (Olonetsk district) *podoshva*; [adj.]: *pochvennyi, bez-*. In Potebnia's opinion (Et., 4, 82), transformed from [old Russian] *p"d"shva* (see *podoshva*). This interpretation is shared by Pogodin (*Sledy*, 202, n.): semasiologically interesting is the Olonetsk regionalism for *pochva—podoshva*"] (*Etimologicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka*, 2:118).

26. V. V. Rozanov, *N. N. Strakhov: Literaturnye izgnanniki.*

27. Scholarly references to Strakhov as a critic of Tolstoy are brief and unrevealing. For representative opinion see Wellek, 4:274–77; Gerstein, pp. 80–82; Vladimir Seduro, *Dostoyevski in Russian Literary Criticism 1846–1956*, p. 77; and A. S. Dolinin, *F. M. Dostoevsky i N. N. Strakhov, shestidesiatye gody*, pp. 249–52.

28. N. N. Strakhov, "Nasha iziashchnaia slovesnost: 1805 g. Chast' lia i 2ia. Sochinenie gr. L. N. Tolstogo. Stat'ia lia," *Otechestvennye zapiski* 12 (January 1866): 519–30; "Nasha iziashchnaia slovesnost'. 1805 g.," ibid. 2 (February 1866): 796–814; "Kritika. *Voina i mir.* Sochinenie gr. L. N. Tolstogo. Tomy I, II, III i IV," *Zaria* 1 (January 1869): 117–52; "*Voina i mir.* Soch. grafa L. N. Tolstogo. Tomy I, II, II i IV. Statia 2ia i posledniaia," ibid. 2 (February 1869): 207–52; "Literaturnaia novost'," ibid. 3 (March 1869): 199; "*Voina i mir.* Sochinenie gr. L. N. Tolstogo. Tomy V i VI," ibid. 1 (January 1870): 108–42; "'Chem liudi zhivy'," *Grazhdanin* (November 1882); "Vzgliad na tekushchuiu literaturu," *Rus'* (January 1833); "Frantsuzskaia stat'ia o L. N. Tolstom," ibid. (February 1885). Stakhov also wrote a review of Tolstoy's pamphlet *O narodnom obrazovanii* in *Grazhdanin*, November 1882. All these articles are collected in N. N. Strakhov, *Kriticheskie stat'i ob I. S. Turgeneve i L. N. Tolstom (1862–1886).* Citations indicate passages of the recent reprint of this book (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), from which my translations are made.

29. The Marxist critic Liubov' Axelrod-Orthodox offers her own interpretation of the floating sphere, which she bases on Tolstoy's *Confession*, as a "metaphysical symbol of life" (L. I. Axelrod-Orthodox, *L. N. Tolstoy: Sbornik statei*, pp. 67–68).

30. Strakhov comments here as follows: "Nevol'no vspominaiutsia stikhi Tiutcheva k 'Kraiu russkogo naroda' (kotoryi on nazyvaet 'krai rodnoi dolgoterpen'ia'), okanchivaiushchiesia . . .:

Ne poimet i ne zametit
Gordyi vzor inoplemenny
Chto skvozit i taino svetit
V nagote tvoei smirennoi.

Udruchennyi noshei krestnoi
Vsiu tebia, zemlia rodnaia,
V rabskom vide Tsar' Nebesnyi
Iskhodil blagoslovliaia"

["One cannot help but remember Tiutchev's verses 'To the Land of the Russian people' (which he calls 'our beloved native land of long-suffering forbearance') that end with: 'The foreigner's haughty eye / will neither

understand nor want to notice / what it is that secretly shines / through your humble rags. / Bearing the heavy burden of the cross / the King of Heaven, looking like a slave, / has walked back and forth across all of you, / blessing you, my beloved native land'"] (p. 378). Apparently Strakhov correctly read Tolstoy's intentions: stripped of sentimentality, the image appears in *Resurrection* as the shaggy old man (*lokhmatyi starik*) who is also referred to as "he who prays to a hole" (*dyrnik*), i.e., one whose religious orientation is aimed toward an "opening into eternity."

31. Andrew and Peter were Christ's first two apostles. Unlike Liubov Axelrod-Orthodox, though (see *L. N. Tolstoy,* p. 75), Strakhov does not include Prince Andrei in this category. Pierre Bezukhov, on the other hand, is perceived by him as slated eventually to carry Russia's message to Europe and other Slavic countries (*Kriticheskie,* pp. 308–10).

32. This remark appeared in a later article, published in 1883 (*Kriticheskie,* p. 378).

33. Strakhov was aware through his correspondence with Tolstoy that Tolstoy was almost ready to give up *Anna Karenina,* which he had come to resent as "banal and trite," and which he had to force himself to finish. For details see *Perepiska L. N. Tolstogo s N. N. Strakhovym 1870–1894,* edited, with an introduction, by B. L. Modzalevsky.

34. "Dushevnaia shalost'"—literally "craze" (*dur'*) (*Kriticheskie,* p. 364). Strakhov here uses the word in its archaic connotation.

35. "Russkaia tekushchaia deistvitel'nost' byla v ponimanii Dostoevskogo vyrazheniem zhivogo 'nerva" istorii chelovechestva, v protivoves tem predshestvuiushchim rezul'tatam etoi istorii, kotorye uzhe uspeli prochno slozhit'sia i opredelit'sia v proshlom" ["The current Russian reality was, in Dostoevsky's understanding, an expression of the 'raw nerve' of mankind's history, as opposed to those preceding results of this history, which already had a chance to solidify and acquire a definite form in the past"] (G. M. Fridlender, *Realizm Dostoevskogo,* p. 369).

36. Dostoevsky would implant the unusual, "stirring" (or "upsetting"—both words are standard organic terms) element of crime in the common "soil" of everyday reality of his works, in order to make crime appear typical, organic to human nature, rather than exceptional. For a most illuminating, thorough, and detailed discussion of this somewhat elusive point of Dostoevskiana, see E. Wasiolek, *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction.*

37. Dostoevsky's contribution to literary criticism has not been extensively researched. For selected representative opinion on Dostoevsky as a critic, see Wellek. 4:270–74; G. M. Fridlender, "Dostoevsky-kritik," R. L. Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form.* A good deal of raw but detailed information is also available in Miller and Strakhov, eds., *Materialy dlia zhizneopisaniia F. M. Dostoevskogo.*

38. Cf. Dostoevsky's announced statement of editorial policy for his journal *Vremia,* where he promised to deal with questions relative to the significance of art and its relation to life and reality (F. M. Dostoevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 13:503).

39. This subject has been well researched by the Soviets. Cf., e.g., "Sovremennik v bor'be s zhurnalami Dostoevskogo," 10:4; Fridlender, *Realizm Dostoevskogo,* p. 124; and other places where Dostoevsky's critical pronouncements are cited and discussed in detail. U. A. Gural'nik (*Tvorchestvo Dostoevskogo,* pp. 293–95) and Wellek (4:270–74) essentially agree that the polemics of the 1860s were decisive in forming Dostoevsky's views and organic theories.

40. M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, for example, comments on Dostoevsky's practice of switching suddenly from expository to feuilletonistic writing (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem,* 8:438).

41. "The Boy Who Went to Jesus' Christmas Party," "The Meek One," "Bobok," "Dream of a Ridiculous Man."

42. E.g., the last pages of *The Raw Youth.*

43. According to R. L. Jackson (p. 134), Dostoevsky believed that every aspiring Russian writer should read all of Tolstoy's works.

44. K. Mochulsky, for example, believes that Dostoevsky improved upon Tolsstoy's technique of inner monologue in the "Dream of a Ridiculous Man" and "The Meek One" (*Dostoevsky: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo,* p. 451). L. Grossman sees Dostoevsky's relentless inner dialogue (cf. also similar comments by M. M. Bakhtin, *Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*) as another perfected variant of the same technique and as part of Dostoevsky's continuing search for new forms of expression ("Dostoevsky—khudozhnik," *Tvorchestvo F. M. Dostoevskogo,* p. 352).

45. Mochulsky, pp. 480ff.

46. Fridlender, *Realizm Dostoevskogo,* pp. 225–27. Cf. also Sigmund Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," pp. 3–21.

47. In a letter to I. S. Turgenev (1871), Dostoevsky writes, e.g.: "A znaete, ved' eto vse pomeshchich'ia literatura. One skazala vse, chto imela skazat' (velikolepno u L'va Tolstogo). No eto v vysshei stepeni pomeshchich'e slovo bylo poslednim. Novogo slova, zameniaiushchego pomeshchich'e eshche ne bylo, da i nekogda. Reshetnikovy nichego ne skazali. No vse-taki Reshetnikovy vyrazhaiut mysl' neobkhodimosti chego-to novogo v khudozhestvennom slove, uzhe ne pomeshchich'ego, khotia i vyrazhaiut v bezobraznom vide" ["But you know, all this is literature of the gentry. It has said everything it had to say (magnificently in Leo Tolstoy's works). But that word, which was of the gentry in the highest degree, was the last one. A new word, to replace that of the gentry, has not yet appeared, and we don't have time for it. The Reshetnikovs haven't said a thing yet. Nevertheless, the Reshetnikovs do express the notion that a new approach is needed in verbal art, something that is no longer of the gentry, even though they express this notion in a hideous manner"] (*F. M. Dostoevsky i I. S. Turgenev,* p. vii).

48. F. M. Dostoevsky, *Dnevnik pisatelia za 1877 god* [Diary of a writer for 1877], p. 273. Citations indicate passages of vol. 3 of the Ladyzhnikov edition, from which my translations are made.

49. One of the premises of the organic theory was that willful, intense effort, conscious creativity, caused emotional and mental strain. The resulting tension caused psychic imbalance.

50. Dostoevsky also employed other euphemisms, some of them with biting sarcasm, to express the same idea. The more frequent expressions are "après moi le déluge," "Ôte-toi de là, que je m'y mette," indifference, savagery (*kalmytskoe otnoshenie k delu*), moral philistinism (*lakeistvo*), acting like a jack (knave) of hearts, and so forth.

51. "Ves' russkii intelligentnyi sloi, vse russkie, stoiashchie nad narodom . . .—vse v tselom nikuda ne godiatsia. Ves' etot sloi, kak tseloe, do nel'zia plokhoi sloi. . . . Verkh nashei intelligentsii ne tol'ko ne mozhet ot"edinit' v sebe, otdel'no i iskliuchitel'no, pravo izobrazhat' soboi grazhdanstvo vsei strany, no, naprotiv, bez naroda i sil, pocherpaemyhk iz nego bespreryvno, utratil by migom i samuiu natsional'nuiu svoiu lichnost'" ["The entire Russian intellectual layer, all Russians who stand above the people as a whole are worthless. That entire layer, as a whole, is an extremely bad layer. The upper segment of our intelligentsia is not only disqualified as a unit, separately and exclusively, from representing the citizenry of the entire country but, on the contrary, without the common people and the strength, continuously derived from them, would in no time lose its national character altogether"] (rough drafts to the *Diary of a Writer* [July–August 1877, chap. 2]; Institut Russkoi literatury AN SSSR, manuscript folio 100, no. 294483, SSKh/b, 12, as quoted by Fridlender, *Realizm Dostoevskogo,* p. 47).

52. Euphemistically referred to by Dostoevsky as "land of holy wonders," to suggest a cemetery of past spiritual glory, a traditional Slavophile designation for Western Europe. The line "strana sviatykh chudes" (land of holy wonders) was taken from a poem by the leading Slavophile thinker, poet, philosopher, and theoretician, A. S. Khomiakov (1804–60), in which he prophesied the spiritual demise of Western Europe. For more details on this see L. Grossman, "Dostoevsky i Evropa," *Tri Sovremennika,* pp. 63–114.

53. See, e.g., the subtitle "Landed squire who obtains faith in God from a peasant" (p. 322).

54. N. Berdiaev, *Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo.*

CHAPTER FOUR

1. A. V. Druzhinin, "O L. N. Tolstom voobshche—'Metel',' 'Dva gusara,'—povesti grafa L. N. Tolstogo."

2. V. [Bot]-kin, "Sovremennye povesti i sovremennye geroi (Pis'mo k redaktoru *Golosa*)."

3. P. V. Annenkov, "O mysli v proizvedeniiakh iziashchnoi slovesnosti."

4. P. V. Annenkov, "Sovremennaia belletristika. Graf L. N. Tolstoy. *Kazaki.* Kavkazskaia povest' 1852 g. L. N. Tolstogo."

5. P. V. Annenkov, "Istoricheskie i esteticheskie voprosy v romane gr. L. N. Tolstogo *Voina i mir.*"

6. E. Edelson, "Russkaia literatura. *Kazaki*—povest' grafa L. N. Tolstogo."

7. S. S. Dudyshkin, "Voennye rasskazy grafa L. N. Tolstogo."

8. N. D. Akhsharumov, *Voina i mir. Sochinenie grafa L. Tolstogo. Chasti I–IV: Razbor.*

9. S. A. Andreevsky, "Iz myslei o L've Tolstom."

10. Sine ira [Vsevolod S. Solov'ev], "*Anna Karenina*"; idem, "Sovremennaia literatura."

11. Ia. P. Polonsky, "Po povodu poslednei povesti grafa L. N. Tolstogo—*Kazaki* (Pis'mo k redaktoru)."

12. A. A. Fet [Shenshin], "Chto sluchilos' po smerti Anny Kareninoi," written in 1877 but lost; available as the authorized copy of the first half dozen pages and published for the first time in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo.*

13. N. S. Leskov, "Geroi otechestvennoi voiny po gr. L. N. Tolstomu."

14. N. S. Leskov, "O kufel'nom muzhike."

15. M. A. Aldanov [Landau], *Tolstoy i Rolland.*

16. In a letter to V. P. Botkin of 1 March 1857, Turgenev actually calls himself a tendentious writer (I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem. Pis'ma,* 3:91).

17. L. N. Nazarova, "Turgenev—kritik,' *Istoriia russkoi kritiki,* 1:509.

18. Cf., e.g., his introductions to the French translation of "The Two Hussars," *Le temps,* 10 February 1875; *War and Peace* (open letter to E. About, editor of *Le XIXe siècle,* 20 January 1880); and A. Badin's article "Un roman du comte Tolstoi avec préface de M. Ivan Tourguéneff."

19. E.g., Turgenev's odd paragraph about Tolstoy's purported "ignorance" in "Po povodu ottsov i detei" (1869) in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem. Sochineniia,* 14:107–8, which earned him a blast from N. N. Strakhov (*Kriticheskie stat'i ob I. S. Turgeneve i L. N. Tolstom,* pp. 299–306).

20. Numerous testimonies are available on this point. First there is Turgenev's own account of V. G. Belinsky's opinion of him as a critic in "Vstrecha moia s Belinskim" (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem. Sochineniia,* 14:205–11); then there is V. Skvonikov's reference to Turgenev's critical qualifications as "truly professional" in his postscript, "Turgenev—kritik," to Turgenev's *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh,* 10:335. D. Blagoi praises highly Turgenev's abilities as a literary critic in his "Iz prozhlogo russkoi literatury: Turgenev—redaktor Feta"; so does M. Kleman in "Pometki I. S. Turgeneva na perevode Fausta M. Vronchenko." Turgenev's critical acumen was admired by Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant, Henry James and others.

21. Cf. M. P. Alekseev, "I. S. Turgenev propagandist russkoi literatury na zapade."

22. Cf. his remark to Tolstoy in a letter of 28 November 1856: "Ia pisatel' perekhodnogo vremeni" ["I am a writer in a transitional period"] (Turgenev's letters are translated from his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem. Pis'ma*). This opinion of himself coincides with that of Apollon Grigor'ev,

who saw Turgenev as a Mosaic figure, "rapturously casting his eye into the 'promised land' of future Russian literature, yet destined never to reach it himself" ("Yavleniia sovremennoi literatury propushchennye nashei kritikoe," *Literaturnaia kritika*, p. 516).

23. "Tolstoy—edinstvennaia nadezhda nashei literatury" ["Tolstoy is the only hope of our literature"] (letter to V. P. Botkin, 17 February 1857); "Tolstoy—edinstvennaia nadezhda nashei osirotevshei literatury" ["Tolstoy is the only hope of our orphaned literature"] (letter to A. A. Fet, 2 July 1871); "Nekogo chitat' krome L. Tolstogo" ["There is no one worth reading except Tolstoy"] (letter to Fet, 14 January 1869); "Nedostatok talantov, osobenno talantov poeticheskikh. Posle L'va tolstogo nichego ne iavilos'. A ved' ego pervaia povest' napechatana v 1852 godu. . . . Bessemianniki i poseiat' nichego ne mogut" ["There is a dearth of talents, especially poetic talents. After Tolstoy nothing came. Yet his first story was printed in 1852. The sterile fellows cannot sow anything"] (letter to Polonsky, 2 January 1868).

24. Classical mythological references to the nature of Tolstoy's talent abound in Turgenev's letters. Cf., e.g. "Kogda eto molodoe vino perebrodit, vyidet napitok, dostoinyi bogov" ["When this young wine has fermented enough, out will come a drink worthy of gods"] (letter to Druzhinin, 17 December 1855). Chekhov was unpleasantly struck by the un-Russian mythological quality of Turgenev's women and comments: "Vse zhenshchiny i devitsy Turgeneva nevynosimy svoei delannost'iu i, prostite, fal'sh'iu. Liza, Elena—eto ne russkie devitsy, a kakie-to Pifii veshchaiushchie" ["Turgenev's women and girls are unbearable in their manneredness and, excuse me, falseness. Liza, Elena, these aren't Russian girls—they are some kind of Delphic oracles who utter prophecies"] (letter to A. S. Suvorin, 24 February 1893). M. O. Gershenzon thinks that Turgenev was a pagan aesthete (*Mechta i mysl' I. S. Turgeneva,* pp. 111–12 and passim).

25. "Mne by khotelos' videt' vas za stankom, s zasuchennymi rukavami i s rabochim fartukom" ["I would like to see you at the workbench, with rolled-up sleeves and a working apron"] (letter to Tolstoy, 29 January 1858).

26. "Velikii pisatel' russkoi zemli" ["Great writer of the Russian land"]. Without capitalization and with the adjective transposed to a "poetic" postpositive position, the message was widely misconstrued as a mere fancy label. But its intelligence was specific: to remind Tolstoy of his duty to write about the Russian land. For many indirect corroborative details of this relatively obscure phase of the two writers' stormy relationship, see Gershenzon, *Mechta i mysl'*.

27. This concept was apparently associated in Turgenev's mind with Hamlet and the "superfluous man" (cf. his "Hamlet and Don Quixote").

28. See Gershenzon, pp. 69–73.

29. This idea was repeated, somewhat out of context, in Turgenev's reminiscences entitled "Po povodu Ottsov i detei" (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem. Sochineniia,* 14:107–8) and represents one of very few such com-

ments by Turgenev in print. Variants found in his complete works indicate that Turgenev struggled to express this idea as clearly, yet as noncommittally, as possible. He evidently considered it an important point (ibid., 16:354–55).

30. Compare how Turgenev treats the fourth volume of *War and Peace* as "sick": "Dostavili mne 4-y tom Tolstogo" ["They delivered to me the fourth volume of Tolstoy"](letter to Annenkov, 25 April 1868); and *Anna Karenina* as "revolting" or "bitter medicine": "Mne davali chitat' *Annu Kareninu*" ["They made me read *Anna Karenina* in doses"] (letter to Annenkov, 3 April 1876).

31. *Le temps,* 10 February 1875.

32. Open letter to E. About, editor of *Le XIXe siècle,* published 20 January 1880.

33. A. Badin, "Un roman du comte Tolstoï avec préface de M. Ivan Tourguéneff."

34. L. N. Nazarova cites the authority of the writer P. D. Boborykin (1836–1921) that Turgenev "ne skryval ni pered kem . . . , chto on ne voskhishchaetsia *ochen' mnogim,* chto est' v *Anne Kareninoi*" ["Turgenev never concealed from anyone that he is less than delighted with *very many* things that can be found in *Anna Karenina*"] ("Turgenev-kritik," p. 520).

35. See his letter to Gustave Flaubert, 24 January 1880.

36. In a letter to Countess S. A. Tolstoy (Tolstoy's wife) of 22 November 1882, Turgenev admits to starting a letter to Tolstoy about his *Confession* but then changing his mind and abandoning it in fear of repercussions.

37. "Vy pishete chto Tolstoy izuchil grecheskii iazyk s pol'zoi. . . . Eta fraza lish' nastol'ko menia bespokoit, naskol'ko ona pokazyvaet, chto emu vse eshche khochetsia mudrit'" ["You write that Tolstoy has studied the Greek language with profit. This phrase bothers me only inasmuch as it shows that he still wants to play the wise man"] (letter to Fet, 17 August 1871); "Raduius' slukham o tom, chto on okanchivaet bol'shoi roman. Dai tol'ko Bog, chtoby tam filosofii ne bylo" ["I rejoice in rumors that have it that he is finishing a big novel. May God give, though, that there should be no philosophy"] (letter to Fet, 11 September 1873).

38. In a letter to L. J. Stechkina (7 May 1878), Turgenev advised the young authoress against reading Tolstoy's works because it might prejudice her approach.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. A. Ia. Piatkovsky, "Istoricheskaia epokha v romane gr. L. N. Tolstogo," pp. 698–704, 713–17, 817–28.

2. V. G. Korolenko, "Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy," *Russkoe bogatstvo* 8 (August 1908): 125–43, and "L. N. Tolstoy. Stat'ia 2ia," *Russkie vedomosti* 9 (September 1908); rpt. in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* 24:233–68.

3. A. M. Skabichevsky, "Razlad khudozhnika i myslitelia."

4. A. M. Skabichevsky, "Graf L. N. Tolstoy kak khudozhnik i myslitel'," p. 13.

5. P. Nikitin [P. N. Tkachev], "Poiavlenie Anny Kareninoi i poedanie onoi saranchei."

6. The articles appeared in various journals (mostly *Otechestvennye zapiski* [Fatherland notes] and *Russkoe bogatstvo* [Russian wealth]—for a while the "official" *narodnik* publication) from 1875 on (Tolstoy was first mentioned by Mikhailovsky in an article in *Nedelia* in 1868). These articles are reprinted in various editions of Mikhailovsky's collected works. Most references here identify, by volume and page number, passages from N. K. Mikhailovsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii,* from which my translations are made. Excepted are "Desnitsa i shuitsa . . ." [The right and left hands . . .]; passages from this work are translated from the more readily available Moscow 1957 edition of Mikhailovsky's *Literaturno-kriticheskie stat'i* and are identified by *DS* and page number. Articles that were not available to me in the ten-volume edition of Mikhailovsky's complete works I have translated from the two-volume edition of his *Poslednie sochineniia;* these passages are identifed by *PS* and volume and page number.

7. For a Soviet view of Mikhailovsky, see G. A. Bialy, "Narodnicheskaia kritika, 2," 2:329–54.

8. See, e.g., N. Gekker, "N. K. Mikhailovsky v otsenke sovremennikov"; A. Gizetti, "Individualizm i obshchestvennost' v mirovozzrenii N. K. Mikhailovskogo," pp. 36–46; E. Frangian, *N. K. Michailowsky als Soziologe und Philosoph: Eine sozialphilosophische Studie;* and D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky, "Peredovaia ideologiia 70-kh godov. Lavrov i Mikhailovsky," *Sobranie sochinenii,* 8:167–87.

9. Isaiah Berlin, "Tolstoy and Enlightenment," pp. 28–51.

10. For some explications on the nature of the method, see R. V. Ivanov-Razumnik, "Mikhailovsky: Sub'ektivnyi metod kak kriticheskii ideal," *Istoriia russkoi obshchestvennoi mysli,* 2:165–95.

11. Apparently what he had in mind was to imply a struggle between Tolstoy's Logos and Eros natures.

12. N. K. Mikhailovsky, "Nashi prizraki. Literaturnye zametki," *Nedelia* 39 (August 1868): 1080–88; rpt. in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii.*

13. A. S. Goldenveizer, in "Prestuplenie kak nakazanie i nakazanie kak prestuplenie. Motivy Tolstovskogo *Voskreseniia,*" pp. 164–211, goes into this issue at length.

14. Lev Shestov [Shvartsman], *Dobro i zlo v uchenii Tolstogo i Nietzsche.*

15. For a comparison of their methods, see the recent study by Phillip A. Duncan, "Echoes of Zola's Experimental Novel in Russia."

16. D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky, "Nabliudatel'nyi i eksperimental'nyi metody v iskusstve," *Sobranie sochinenii,* 6:75–79.

17. D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky, *Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy, Sobranie sochinenii,* vol. 3.

18. Ibid., p. 256.

19. Ibid., pp. 256–61.

20. R. V. Ivanov-Razumnik, *Istoriia russkoi obshchestvennoi mysli.*

21. Grigor'ev referred to overrefinement of form without a corresponding sophistication of message as a kind of intellectual snobbery and called it moral philistinism. See pp. 78–93 above.

22. Ivanov-Razumnik, *Istoriia russkoi obshchestvennoi mysli,* 2:219.

CHAPTER SIX

1. Valerii Ia. Briusov, *Za moim oknom,* p. 8, and "Na pokhoronakh Tolstogo."

2. Aleksandr Blok, "Solntse nad Rossiei."

3. Akim L'vovich Flekser, *L. N. Tolstoy: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo, 1828–1908.*

4. Andrei Bely [Boris Bugaev], "Lev Tolstoy."

5. Andrei Bely, *Tragediia tvorchestva: Dostoevsky i Tolstoy.*

6. Viacheslav Ivanov, *Lev Tolstoy i kul'tura;* rpt. in *Borozdy i mezhi,* pp. 73–93.

7. Mikhail Kuzmin, "L. N. Tolstoy. Posmertnye proizvedeniia."

8. S. Adrianov, "Kriticheskie nabroski. Posmertnye proizvedeniia."

9. Iu. I Aikhenval'd, *Posmertnye sochineniia L. N. Tolstogo.*

10. A. Gruzinsky, "Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy," *Literaturnye ocherki,* pp. 267–302.

11. For a selection of criticism on Merezhkovsky one can consult these works: B. Griftsov, *Tri myslitelia: V. Rozanov, D. Merezhkovsky, L. Shestov;* Z. Hippius, *Merezhkovsky;* A. Fomin, "D. S. Merezhkovsky"; Marc Slonim, *From Chekhov to the Revolution,* pp. 111–17 and passim; Andrei Bely [Boris Bugaev]. "Merezhkovsky"; G. V. Plekhanov, "Iskusstvo i obshchestvennaia zhizn'," *Literatura i estetika*; and B. Eikhenbaum and Iu. Nikolsky, "Merezhkovsky—kritik."

12. D. S. Merezhkovsky, *L. Tolstoy i Dostoevsky. Zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Saint Petersburg, 1901); *Religiia L. Tolstogo i Dostoevskogo* (Saint Petersburg, 1902). My translations here are from passages, identified by volume and page number, of vol. 7 of the Vol'f edition and vols. 11 and 12 of the Sytin edition of Merezhkovsky's *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii.*

13. Announced previously in Merezhkovsky's programmatic essay *O prichinakh upadka i o novykh techeniiakh russkoi literatury* [On causes of the decline and new currents in Russian literature] (Saint Petersburg, 1893; rpt. in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*). Merezhkovsky's thesis was that symbolism gave expression to a new religious feeling that was tied in with expectations of the second coming of Christ, who was referred to as "the symbol." For details see H. Bedford, "Dmitry Merezhkovsky, the Third Testament and the Third Humanity."

14. English translation (parts only): D. S. Merejkovski, *Tolstoi as a Man and Artist. With an Essay on Dostoievski* (London: Constable, 1901). Ample bibliographical information about other translations of Merezhkovsky's works can be obtained from the last pages of vol. 24 of the Sytin edition of Merezhkovsky's collected works.

15. Scathing critiques of symbolism as a movement were published by, among others, N. K. Mikhailovsky, who also wrote sharply negative re-

views on Merezhkovsky's study of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky (see Mikhailovsky's collected works, 7:519–50; 10:1069–70). See also K. I. Chukovsky, "D. S. Merezhkovsky (Tainovidets veshchi)" [D. S. Merezhkovsky—the seer of the thing]; and Andrei Bely [Boris Bugaev], *Nachalo veka,* pp. 168–69, 172.

16. In recent years the idea has been given some attention. It has been thoroughly explored by Marshall McLuhan, who developed in this context the concepts of "hot" (high saturation or definition) and "cool" (low definition) media (*Understanding Media*); see also Gerald E. Stearn, ed., *McLuhan: Hot and Cool.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Terras, *Belinskij and Russian Literary Criticism,* pp. 3–8.

2. V. V. Veresaev [Smidovich], *Zhivaia zhizn'. O Dostoevskom i L've Tolstom.*

3. V. P. Kranikhfel'd, "Lev Tolstoy," in *V mire idei i obrazov,* pp. 206–304.

4. Maksim Gorky [A. M. Peshkov], "Lev Tolstoy," written in 1908–9 but first published in Gorky's *Istoriia russkoi literatury,* pp. 291–95.

5. M. Gorky [A. M. Peshkov], *Vospominaniia o L've Tolstom.*

6. Andreevich [Evgenii A. Solov'ev], *L. N. Tolstoy.*

7. Petr B. Struve, *Stat'i o L've Tolstom.*

8. N. N. Iordansky, "Lev Tolstoy i sovremennoe obshchestvo."

9. N. V. Shelgunov, "Filosofiia zastoia."

10. Lubov Axelrod (-Orthodox), *Tolstois Weltanschauung und ihre Entwickelung.*

11. L. Axelrod-Orthodox, *L. N. Tolstoy: Sbornik statei.*

12. Lev Trotsky [Bronstein], "Tolstoy."

13. A. Dolinin, "Problema smerti u L. N. Tolstogo."

14. G. V. Plekhanov, "Simptomaticheskaia oshibka," *Tovarishch,* 5 October 1907; "Tolstoy i priroda," written for the unpublished almanac in honor of Tolstoy's eightieth birthday, 28 September 1908, but first published in *Zvezda* 4 (April 1924): 296–99; "Otsiuda i dosiuda," *Zvezda,* 29 December 1910; "Smeshenie predstavlenii," *Mysl',* December 1910 and January 1911; "Karl Marx i Lev Tolstoy," *Sotsial-demokrat,* 13 January 1911; "Eshche o Tolstom," *Zvezda,* serialized 26 February, 5, 12, and 18 March 1911. Quotations are translations of passages of these articles, identified by page number, as they are reprinted in *L. N. Tolstoy v russkoi kritike,* ed. S. P. Bychkov.

15. This passage is translated from G. V. Plekhanov, *Literatura i estetika,* 1:3–4. Subsequent citations are by volume and page only.

16. See, e.g., Gleb Struve, "Tolstoy in Soviet Criticism," p. 177. See also G. P. Semenova, "Problema ideinosti i khudozhestvennosti v estetike G. V. Plekhanova"; E. N. Zaslonova, *Plekhanov ob esteticheskom ideale;* M. Rozental', "Esteticheskie i literaturno-kriticheskie vzgliady G. V. Plekhanova," preface to G. V. Plekhanov, *Iskusstvo i literatura;* G. V. Plekhanov, *Literatur-*

noe nasledie G. V. Plekhanova, vol. 1; B. I. Bursov, "G. V. Plekhanov"; and B. I. Bursov, "Literaturno-esteticheskie vzgliady G. V. Plekhanova."

17. The first was the rule of nonresistance to evil. The remaining four were, according to Plekhanov, "do not be angry, do not fornicate, do not swear, do not make war."

18. "The great leader and teacher of workers of the whole world, a brilliant theoretician of Marxism," translated from *Malaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* [The little Soviet encyclopedia] 10 vols. (Moscow, 1958–60), 5:452.

19. Lenin's pronouncements on literary matters have been collected in a number of books, most of them repeating the same material extracted piecemeal from his works and the works of those who knew him: S. D. Dreiden, ed., *Lenin i iskusstvo, Literatura. Muzyka. Teatr. Kino;* M. Lifshifts, ed., *Lenin o kul'ture i iskusstve; Lenin o literature;* N. I Krutikova, ed; *Lenin o kul'ture i iskusstve;* and N. I. Krutikova, ed., *V. I. Lenin o literature i iskusstve.*

20. [V. I. Lenin,] "Lev Tolstoy kak zerkalo russkoi revoliutsii," *Proletarii,* 24 September 1908.

21. [V. I. Lenin,] "L. N. Tolstoy," *Sotsial-demokrat,* 29 November 1910; "Ne nachalo-li povorota?", ibid.; "L. N. Tolstoy i sovremennoe rabochee dvizhenie," *Nash put',* 28 November 1910; "Tolstoy i proletarskaia bor'ba," *Rabochaia gazeta,* 31 December 1910; "Geroi 'ogovorochki'," *Mysl',* December 1910; "L. N. Tolstoy i ego epokha," *Zvezda,* 22 January 1911. Page references in the text identify passages from *L. N. Tolstoy v russkoi kritike,* ed. S. P. Bychkov, from which my translations are made.

22. Gleb Struve, "Tolstoy in Soviet Criticism."

23. "Artisitic works founded on pure observation become 'documents,'" writes D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovsky, citing a term made current by Emile Zola, "by which it is possible to study an epoch" ("'Pushkinskoe' i 'Gogolevskoe': Khudozhestvennyi method Gogolia," *Sobranie sochinenii,* 1:48).

24. The first stage, as explained by the Marxists-Leninists, began with the abortive Decembrist revolt of 1825, which was staged by a small band of progressive, dedicated noblemen. The second stage (1865–1905) was carried by the *raznochintsy,* a much larger group and one much closer to the people, made up of men from all walks of life. The third and final stage was to be carried by the proletariat, the equivalent of all the Russians. Each stage would take the mythical forty years (cf. the biblical Exodus). Accordingly the revolution proper was to take place about 1945, not 1917. This explains Lenin's puzzling statement on 22 January 1917 that "we older men may not live to see the decisive battles of the approaching revolution." For details see Robert K. Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra,* pp. 461ff. The statement underscores the mythical base of Lenin's thinking.

25. See Aristotle's *Poetics,* beginning of chap. 9.

26. LEF (the name means "left front in art") was a Futurist-founded organization, as well as a journal founded by Futurists in 1923 in which they asserted their claim to dominate the art of the future and opposed the tendency, already manifest, toward a return to a conservative realism. For

details see William E. Harkins, *Dictionary of Russian Literature* (Paterson, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1959), p. 127.

27. Promulgated by Lenin in "Partiinaia organizatsiia i partiinaia literature," first published in the legal Marxist newspaper *Novaia zhizn'* in 1905 (Lenin, *Sochineniia,* 10:21–31). On this short but (once again) definitive article an incredible amount has been written in the Soviet Union. For a selection of undeniably competent scholarship see L. Stolovich, "Lenin i problema khudozhestvennoi tsennosti"; V. Gorbunov, "Bor'ba za proletarskuiu partiinost' literatury"; and Ia. El'sberg, *Leninskoe nasledie, zhizn' i literatura.*

28. Herman Ermolaev, review of *Vom kritischen zum sozialistischen Realismus,* p. 90.

29. V. V. Zen'kovsky, *Istoriia russkoi filosofii,* 2:279.

30. Georg Lukács, "Tolstoy and the Development of Realism," pp. 78–94.

31. For details see B. S. Meilakh, "Voprosy literatury i literaturnoi kritiki v rabotakh V. I. Lenina," and B. I. Bursov, "Plekhanov." See also Meilakh's recent book *Lenin i problemy russkoi literatury XIX—nachala XX vv.*

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